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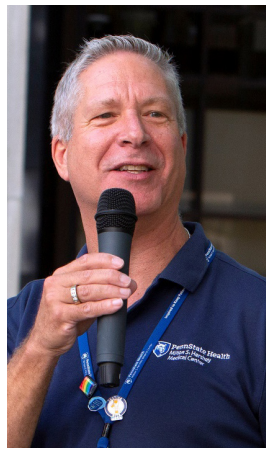

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PG. 17

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What a difference a gay makes

Huntington borough's LGBT ordinance is a case study in one man's perseverance

By Frank Pizzoli

Bullett

Twist the title of a popular jazz song from 'day' to *What a difference a gay makes*. And you have Anthony Bullett.

He spent nearly a decade pushing for an LGBT-inclusive ordinance in Huntington, Pa. His perseverance paid off on December 17, 2019 when that municipality's borough council voted 4-3 to pass an ordinance enacting protections in employment, housing and public accommodations. Huntington joins 57 other municipalities in enacting such legislation.

Bullet tells *The Central Voice* about his long-awaited accomplishment.

He got involved with passing the ordinance "because of remarks made by the now former mayor, Dee Dee Brown, at a ceremony rededicating the graves of the Colored Soldiers of the Civil War buried in our local cemetery."

Exactly what happened?

The mayor said, according to Bullett, "something to the effect that we should be proud that our cemetery was never segregated." He wrote a letter to the mayor "saying that whatever perceived equality there was in death it did not exist. While the cemetery and the town may not have been segregated there was no equality among races in life."

Bullett went on to explain "those who are LGBT do not enjoy the same rights that she does and that she and the borough council could rectify this situation, at least locally, by adopting an inclusive anti-discrimination ordinance."

That didn't happen. At least not right then.

Undeterred, Bullett said, "I learned that things will happen in due time. As long as no one says shut up, then just keep talking." So he kept the idea alive.

Please see **WHAT A DIFFERENCE,** page **18**

HAS YORK FIGURED OUT HOW TO SPEAK WITHIN ITS LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY?

By Tesla Taliaferro
The Central Voice York Correspondent

Much like the rest of America, York County has seen its share of ineffective communication when it comes to speaking to one another.

In the age of social media and picking sides, it seems all too easy to boil discussions down into black and white arguments. And while one narrative may rise above another, it is often the people sharing their perspectives that get trampled down when joining in discussions, either online or face-to-face. There are, however, many who try to rise above the fray. Instead they build bridges within the community and across the potential divide.

"If we don't work together as advocates, we're hypocrites."
-James Sawor

When it comes to communicating with people who do not share the same views, James Sawor, Chief of Staff for Pennsylvania House Rep. Carol Hill-Evans (95th District), approaches it "in the same way I would a relationship disagreement." He is openly-gay and open minded. He's also a political science major with biology and religion minors which help him in a well-rounded way to see many sides of issues.

"I give the other person time to speak," Sawor said. "And I acknowledge what is said. I may retort with what I feel, but if I do not believe that my perspective will change your view, I am not going to turn our discussion into an argument."

Sawor admits that he enjoys engaging in political conversations, even online. "Banter is fine," he asserts, "I find it fun." However, he acknowledges that is not the case for everyone. "If you don't want my opinion, I won't give it. Our discussions may change my mind, or they may make me more liberal."

In bringing up politics though, Sawor points out that no person is a "one issue voter." By that he means "just because you have one aspect of your identity, like being gay or aligning with a specific political party, it doesn't define the whole of who you are."

He feels it's important to recognize that in being LGBTQ+, "we are as diverse as any other identity would have" and that "for many, fighting for equality and equity is a major part of that identity." Though, he admits that "we are not all going to agree on how to best be accepted by society." He also acknowledges that not everyone identifies with Identity Politics. (See *Central Voice* Cartoon, page 4)

Please see **ACROSS THE DIVIDE,** page **8**

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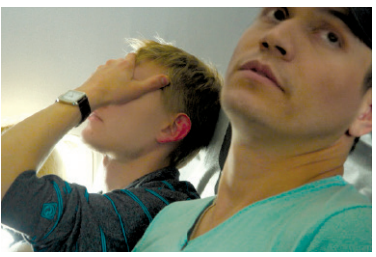
INTERNATIONAL

CHECHNYA

'Welcome to Chechnya' documentary



Advocacy meets suspense in "Welcome to Chechnya," a chilling examination of both the brutality that the Chechen LGBT community is forced to face on a daily basis and the difficulty of leaving the country for peace and safety. It's very much of a piece with the earlier films from journalist-turned-filmmaker David France: His stirring, Oscar-nominated "How to Survive a Plague" showed how gay men and their allies in 1980s New York City stepped up to face the HIV/AIDS crisis in the face of government indifference, while "The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson" used the ongoing investigation into the death of a legendary trans activist to examine transphobia in the NYPD and other government institutions. With "Chechnya," France goes behind enemy lines in an ongoing crisis: the systematic beatings, torture and "honor killings" of LGBT people under the Putin-backed regime of strongman dictator Ramzan Kadyrov. The government claims that there are no queer people in the country, but as we learn from first-hand testimony from the film's courageous subjects — and from terrifying cellphone footage of violent acts — they have been forced into silence in a country where families are encouraged to shun, report and even kill their own "deviant" family members.

GREAT BRITAIN

Edinburgh Castle lit up in the rainbow flag

Edinburgh Castle joined military landmarks around the country as they were lit up to mark 20 years since the ban on gay troops serving in the armed forces was lifted reports Claire Galloway, Trainee for *Edinborough Live.* The ban was lifted in 2000 but previously saw lesbian, gay and bisexual people ejected from the military on the basis of their sexual orientation. Until 12 January 2000, lesbian, gay and bisexual people were not allowed to serve in the British Army, RAF, or the Royal Navy. While many still signed up, they faced an investigation and dishonorable discharge if the military found out.

NATIONAL

Half U.S. population obese by 2030

Queer angle - Lesbian and bisexual women are more likely to be overweight or obese, according to *The Journal of American College Health.* Obesity continues to be a serious health problem in the U.S., contributing to heart disease, diabetes, joint disorders and even certain types of cancer reports Alice Park for Time online. And according to the latest data, more Americans will be obese by 2030 than ever before. The researchers found that, over the past few decades, rates of obesity, defined as having a BMI of 30 or greater, have been rapidly rising. For example, in 2000, no state had an obesity rate higher than 35%. By 2010, a full 27 states were over that mark.

WASHINGTON DC

GOP lawmaker plotted insurrections

A report released in late December by Washington state House of Representatives alleges that Matt Shea, former FBI agent, "as a leader in the Patriot Movement, planned, engaged in and promoted a total of three armed conflicts of political violence against the United States Government in three states outside the state of Washington over a three-year period."
Eric Levitz reports for *New York* magazine, the chair of the Republican caucus in Washington's state legislature acknowledged that he had written a manifesto on the "Biblical Basis for War." In that document, the lawmaker argued that – as far as Jesus Christ was concerned – American Christians have the right to "kill all males" who support abortion, same-sex marriage or communism (so long as they first give such infidels the opportunity to renounce their heresies). The manifesto's revelation cost its author, Matt Shea, his chairmanship. But Shea insisted that his writings were merely "a summary of church sermons on Old Testament war that could help place current events in historical context." And so, the Washington GOP did not call for Shea to resign or expel him from its House caucus.

PENNSYLVANIA

House Dems push health care protections

PA House Democrats signaled they will force action in the PA House on critical legislation to protect access to health care for Pennsylvanians in the face of efforts by President Trump and Washington extremists and special interests to destroy the Affordable Care law. The protections will also protect the LGBT taxpayers and their families. "The affordable care law gave millions more Americans access to health insurance, saved countless families from bankruptcy resulting from exorbitant health care costs, kept rural and urban hospitals open in Pennsylvania, and created and preserved thousands of health care jobs," Democratic Leader Frank Dermody said. "We're standing up for people's health care, not the agenda of political extremists and special interests. That's why we want votes in the House on these bills to save lives and the financial well-being of Pennsylvania individuals and families."

MICHIGAN

Citizen initiative would prohibit discrimination

A growing committee of Michigan citizens submitted petition language today to the Board of State Canvassers seeking to initiate legislation amending the state's current civil rights law — the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act. The proposed initiative would clarify that the Act's existing prohibitions on discriminatory practices, policies, and customs in the exercise of civil rights prohibits discrimination based upon sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. The petition submitted today by Fair and Equal Michigan, a Michigan ballot question committee, starts the process to amend the Act. "When I co-sponsored Michigan's Civil Rights Act in 1973 with Rep. Daisy Elliott, it was about treating everybody equally, especially in employment, housing and our most basic of services; it is long past the time to recognize sexual orientation and gender identity," said Hon. Mel Larsen, former Member, Michigan House of Representatives. "The legislature can act at any time to amend the Civil Rights Act. This coalition of Michigan citizens has support across LGBTQ groups, the business and philanthropic sectors, and both sides of the political aisle. There is more that brings us together - than forces us apart. Business leaders know that to stay competitive we need to support the people we employ, and that means making clear that there is no place for discrimination in the workplace," said Jerry Norcia, President and Chief Executive Officer, DTE Energy. "Today's top job creators are looking to grow in states and communities that are welcoming to everyone. If Michigan wants to compete, we must take a clear stand against discrimination in any form. This effort strengthens Michigan business, our economy and our people."

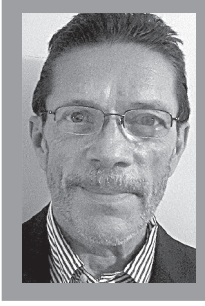
FLORIDA

Anti-queer bills dominate legislative session

Florida anti-queer lawmakers have filed draconian legislation that would imprison doctors providing medical care to transgender youth for up to 15 years, says Equality Florida. In total, eight bills attacking the rights of LGBTQ Floridians have been filed in Florida's 2020 legislative session, two of which will be heard in committee this week. "This is the most overtly anti-LGBTQ agenda from the Florida legislature in recent memory," said Jon Harris Maurer, Equality Florida's Public Policy Director. "It runs the gamut from openly hostile legislation that would arrest and imprison doctors for providing medically necessary care, to legislation that would carelessly erase critical local LGBTQ protections." Regarding the recently filed Transgender Youth Medical Care Ban bills, Gina Duncan, Equality Florida's Director of Transgender Equality, said, "Transgender youth are some of the most at risk in our community. It is outrageous that conservative legislators would threaten their health and safety. Medical professionals, not politicians, should decide what medical care is in the best interest of a patient. Forcing a doctor to deny best practice medical care and deny support to transgender youth can be life-threatening."

Seeing who your friends are in print is eye-opening

Publisher's Voice



By Frank Pizzoli

Decades ago, I'm on the horn with James Carville. Yeah, *that* Carville.

I'm arranging a private satellite broadcast of a debate between his candidate Robert Casey, Sr. (who was Pennsylvania's governor from 1987-1994) and William Scranton, Jr. (whose father William was Pennsylvania's governor from 1963 to 1967). Got all that? Good. Because we don't teach history or civics anymore. That's how the 1% keeps the 99% fighting with each other. That way they stay in power. We stay disenfranchised.

It was that Pennsylvania gubernatorial campaign that prompted Carville to say: Between Paoli and Penn Hills, Pennsylvania is Alabama without the blacks. They didn't film *The Deer Hunter* there for nothing – the state has the second-highest concentration of NRA members, behind Texas. This quote is often paraphrased as "Philadelphia in the east, Pittsburgh in the west, and Alabama in the middle."

Either way, you get the point? Right?

So now let's look at where Pennsylvania ended up on the 2019 State Equality Index issued by the Human Rights Campaign.

Along with Pennsylvania, 27 other states were placed in the lowest-rated category *High Priority to Achieve Basic Equality*. Those states are *Bada-Bing* Alabama; Alaska; Arizona; Arkansas; Florida; Georgia; Idaho; Indiana; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Michigan; Mississippi; Missouri; Montana; Nebraska; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; South Carolina; South Dakota; Tennessee; Texas; Virginia; West Virginia; and Wyoming.

A parallel HRC report called the *Municipal Equality Index* noted capital city Harrisburg's score on their 2019 evaluation of protections dropped 12 points to a score of 69. For 2018, the city's score was 81. Harrisburg's score last round was the lowest of 10 Pennsylvania municipalities in the index.

In fairness, please note that in 1983, Harrisburg passed a local ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the first Pennsylvania city to extend non-discrimination protections for transgender people. The ordinance actually created the city's Human Relations Commission which included other protected groups in its charter.

> *"A man is known by the company he keeps."*
>
> English Proverb

Again, I ask: Got all that? Good. Because democracy and creating change is messy, complicated. It only works if we stay engaged. Please stay engaged.

So, if Mom was right we'll be judged by the company we keep.

And here's the hilarious part about the disturbing lack of basic civil rights for the Keystone State's taxpaying queers. We all know there are queers in the General Assembly. And I don't mean Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta or Rep. Brian Sims. They're not hiding. They're Manly-Men.

But, consider this.

The Central Voice reported July 18, 2019 that Sims told *The Advocate*, "I serve with over a dozen closeted members, whom I would never identify to anybody else, and when I joined the legislature, many of them were co-sponsors of anti-LGBT bills."

And, think about *this*.

Kenyatta told CV that when he talks to his legislative colleagues, he finds support expressed verbally "but then I find no action, no follow through." I know what you're thinking. Does he mean some of the same legislators Sims alleges are in the closet? Way back in there where they keep the shoes, as one friend says. Like anyone cares except them.

In 2017, Republican representative Daryl Metcalfe insinuated that fellow lawmaker, Democrat Matt Bradford, is gay after Bradford touched his sleeve to get his attention.

"Look, I'm a heterosexual," Metcalfe sneered. "I have a wife, I love my wife, I don't like men, as you might, but don't, stop touching me all the time.

"It's like, keep your hands to yourself. Like, if you want to touch somebody, you have people on your side of the aisle who might like it, I don't."

Despite outcry from both sides of the aisle at Metcalfe's gay panic moment, the legislator refused to apologize. Bradford is married to a woman and has four children.

Metcalfe is best-known in the state for his vociferous attacks on LGBT people and Sims in particular.

"You can't make this stuff up! The most homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist, xenophobic member of our government is using legislative time, and tax payer dollars, to interrupt [sic] a meeting to announce his sexual orientation," Sims wrote in a Facebook post.

"THIS is what dealing with Republicans in Pennsylvania has become. THIS is why they're attacking our youngest and most vulnerable members of the LGBT community. THIS is what a broken moral compass, combined with gerrymandered, false leadership looks like," he added.

The question is *How much longer will queer taxpayers be taxed without proper representation?* Will the company we keep be the 27 other states with no civil rights protections?

Voice Box

Notes from our readers

E-mail your comments to frankpizzoli@gmail.com

NO BS

Facebook comments on Jan-Feb 2020 Publisher's Note by Frank Pizzoli entitled "Wishing our community was organic as my vegetables"

Nicely written. **– Russ Boggs**

Nice! - **Bill Krentz**

Would echo Russ and Bill's sentiments. **– Jamin Gibson**

Excellent. **– Matt Riley**

Showing Up in 2020 is a GREAT RESOLUTION! **– Jeffery Mitchell,** aka **Betty Whitecastle**

Brilliantly written as always, Frank. You are my hero. **- Rosemary Browne**

Excellent as always **- Vicki DiSylvester**

Nice work as usual Frank! Thoughtful and positive and no BS. **– Trum Simmons**

(Like our award-winning tagline says – Real gay news. We give it to you straight!)

EMPOWERING

Thanks for the opportunity to write for The Central Voice. **- Tesla Taliaferro, Outreach Coordinator, Rainbow Resource Center, formerly York LGBTQIA+ Resource Center**

INFORMING

Thank you, Frank. This is lovely! **- Attorney Sharon R. López** (Referring to our profile of her many years of work on civil rights issues. She covers the US Supreme Court LGBT cases for CV and sat in the court room Oct. 8 when justices heard oral arguments.) See www.thecentralvoice.com

SHINE

Thank you, I really appreciate it. The heartshine article is very beautifully written. Thanks for your patience and for your love for the community! **- Kali Tennis, Founding board member, heartshine.org**

THANKS

Great issue! (Jan-Feb 2020). Hamilton Health Center thanks you. - **Brad Gebhart, Hamilton Health Center (and The Central Voice cartoonist)**

KNOW

"I want to make sure you know how much you and The Central Voice are appreciated. Your stories are amazing!" **- An appreciative reader & business owner**

the Central Voice

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Community Voices

Steady growth continues despite unprecedented attacks

Analysis finds increased revenues, but not from individuals

LGBT people have experienced unprecedented attacks by the Trump administration, coupled with efforts by states to advance religious exemptions laws and draconian legislation targeting transgender people, said the Movement Advancement Project.

MAP
movement advancement project

These attacks require queer organizations to be nimble in organizational priorities and investments. Despite the tense political landscape, the 2019 National Movement Report, published annually by MAP, finds that national LGBT organizations remained steadfast in providing vital programs and services with continued increase in revenue and diverse revenue sources.

The 2019 National Movement Report provides a comprehensive and standardized look at fiscal year 2018 for 40 major LGBT advocacy organizations. These organizations reported total combined 2018 revenue (including in-kind contributions) of $299.3 million—up 8% from 2017. The majority of 2018 expenses (79%) was spent on programs and services, indicating that the largest LGBT social justice organizations operate efficiently.

"Despite the relentless attacks of the Trump administration and attempts to undermine hard-earned nondiscrimination protections for the LGBT community, movement organizations are well-equipped and poised to respond," said Ineke Mushovic, MAP executive director. "Especially heading into the 2020 elections, it is reassuring to see a steady increase in support for LGBT organizations. However, we cannot take for granted our hard-won gains for LGBT people and their families, and it is critical that we continue to support these organizations in the fight for progress and equality for all."

Among the key findings for organizations participating in the report:

Revenue & Expenses Growing: Excluding in-kind contributions, organizations reported an aggregate 10% revenue increase from 2017 to 2018. Aggregate revenue including in-kind contributions was up 8% for the same period. Over the past five years, total revenue has increased 47% from 2014 to 2018.

Total combined 2018 expenses (including in-kind) across all participating organizations were $269.8 million–up 6% from 2017. Over the past five years, total expenses increased by 33% from 2014 to 2018, demonstrating growth in programs and services.

More Donors: Individual donor contributions remain the most significant source of revenue among participating LGBT organizations, comprising 32% of their total 2018 revenue.

In 2018, participating organizations saw a 15% increase in the number of individual donor contributions from 2017.

From 2017 to 2018, the number of large donors ($25,000+ per year) increased by 29%, medium donors ($1,000-$24,999) by 7%, and small donors ($35-$999) by 4%.

One group that experienced a five-year high in individual contributions is CenterLink, a member-based coalition of community centers serving LGBT communities. "Support for LGBT community centers is vital to the development of creating healthy and thriving LGBT communities," said Denise Spivak, interim CEO of CenterLink. "As CenterLink serves over 250 LGBT community centers in 47 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C., we are immensely grateful to individual donors whose contributions allow us to provide technical assistance and support to those centers. Whether it's providing vital direct services or organizing for social change, our member centers are the unsung heroes who meet the everyday needs of over 2 million LGBT people across the country every year."

Staff Reflects Diversity: Participating organizations employed a total of 1,028 full-time and 165 part-time staff.

Organizations that reported staff demographics have diverse staff that reflects the overall population. Fifty-four percent of staff are Caucasian, while 15% identify as Black, 14% as Latinx, 8% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1% as Native American, 4% as multiracial, and 4% as some other race or ethnicity.

Among senior staff and board members of LGBT organizations, 62% of senior staff are Caucasian as are 65% of board members.

Slightly less than half of all staff identifies as men (40%), and 47% identify as women, while 6% identify as non-binary and 6% as genderqueer or some other identity. Fifteen percent of staff identify as transgender. The majority (59%) of staff are between the ages of 30 and 54.

Among board members, 49% identify as men, 46% as female, 2% as non-binary, and 2% as genderqueer or some other identity. Eight percent of board members identify as transgender.

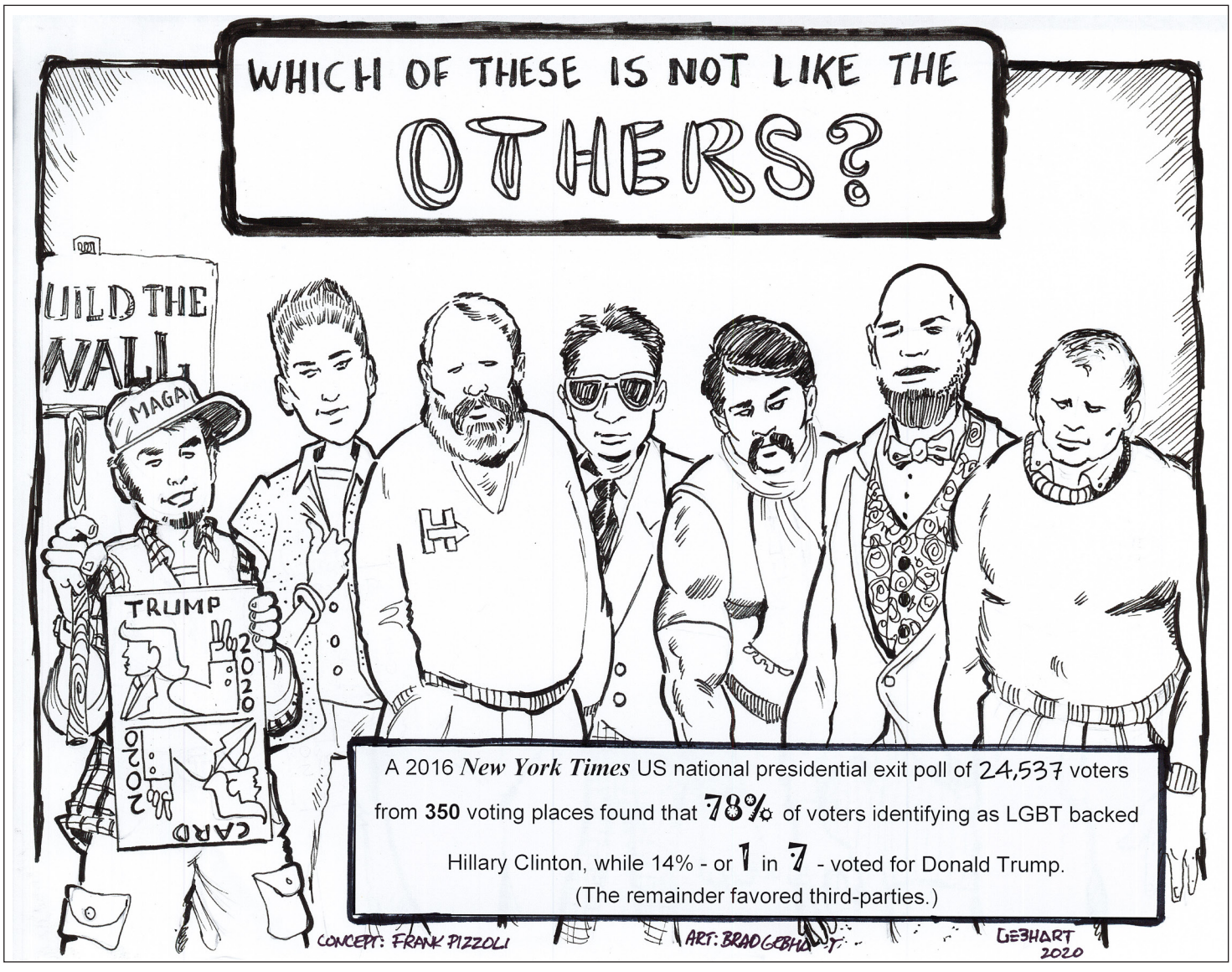
Of organizations providing data on the sexual orientation of their staff, 45% of staff identified as gay or lesbian, 10% as bisexual, 16% as queer, 15% as another orientation, and 14% as straight.

Few Queers Contribute: While there has been a cumulative increase in revenue from individual contributions, the data continue to reiterate findings from previous years that very few LGBT people contribute to these major legal, advocacy, and public education LGBT organizations. Based on the number of donors to participating organizations (assuming that all donors are LGBT and there are no duplicates), only 3.4% of LGBT people contributed $35 or more in 2018 to participating organizations.

As the political landscapes shift for LGBT equality, tracking these trends moving forward will be crucial for understanding the financial health and stability of the movement.

MAP's mission is to provide independent and rigorous research, insight and communications that help speed equality and opportunity for all. MAP works to ensure that all people have a fair chance to pursue health and happiness, earn a living, take care of the ones they love, be safe in their communities, and participate in civic life.

INFO: www.lgbtmap.org


WHICH OF THESE IS NOT LIKE THE
OTHERS?
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CARD
A 2016 New York Times US national presidential exit poll of 24,537 voters from 350 voting places found that 78% of voters identifying as LGBT backed Hillary Clinton, while 14% - or 1 in 7 - voted for Donald Trump. (The remainder favored third-parties.)
CONCEPT: FRANK PIZZOLI
ART: BRAD GEBHART
GEBHART 2020

Community Voices CONTINUED

Lack of civil rights biggest impediment to health and wellness

by Frank Pizzoli

Author's note: I published this essay in 2001 when I was invited to serve as Guest Editor of Experimental Forest, a regional literary journal. I called the edition Queer Health. Seems like the more things change the more they stay the same. Even worsen.

REPRINTED FROM 2001

The killing field inches closer.

If you think this is a melodramatic overreaction by a big queen, kindly think again.

I fit no real gay "stereotype". Most people of any sexual orientation fit no known human molds, but we're nation of tinkerers. We like categories and lists. We deal best when everyone and everything is in its proper pigeonhole. Apparently, for many folks in rural Pennsylvania (that's everything outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh or as James Carville remarked when first campaigning for now-deceased Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey: *from Paoli to Penn Hills it's like the State of Alabama without all the African Americans)*, queers don't have a suitable pigeonhole – so they harm us.

The same violent scene plays out all over rural America.

In sleepy Snyder County, a man was perceived as "making a pass". He was beaten into in a coma, where he remains. No mention of the "gay" aspect in our local daily.

In Schuylkill County, a chief of police found two teens, aged 18 and 19, in a remote area with some beer. That's what kids in the northeast's Anthracite Coal Region do – hit the strip mines and drink beer. He noticed a condom on the seat and warned the one lad, whom he knew, that he'd better tell his grandfather that he's gay – or the police official would do so himself. (What a guy!) By morning, the kid was dead from a successful suicide. *The Advocate* found space to run the story. Nothing locally.

In Emmaus, witnesses last year told police that a man shot and killed a teenage boy following jokes that the boy had a crush on a man. The local daily reported that 15-year-old Kevin, his sister Alicia, a mutual friend Michael, age 24, and three other teens were hanging out in a boardinghouse. Kevin accidentally spit on Michael. When Kevin tried to wipe the saliva off Gambler's arm, Alicia joked, "Oh, what are you, gay, Kevin?" Although Michael laughed at the joke, he grabbed a .45-caliber handgun from underneath a pile of clothes and shot Kevin point-blank in the forehead. "Kevin wasn't gay," Chris, one of the teens in the room at the time, told the local newspaper.

✗ ...a man shot and killed a teenage boy following jokes that the boy had a crush on a man.

In nearby Williamsport, a girl who eventually shot a friend was taunted with the label "lesbian". *Ah, come on.* You know what a lesbian is – the biggest male fantasy of straight men is to have sex with two of them: lesbians are okay to play with, just don't get caught in a civil rights march trying to establish that your biggest sexual fantasy needs civil rights too. Although the girl's other troubles, no doubt, influenced her behavior over time – and violence is no solution to any difficulty – funny how this epithet pushed her over the edge. No real reporting on that aspect of the situation.

Violence is what prompted Harrisburg, PA's Dan Miller to speak out at a public meeting some years ago. His employer, Don Demuth, Camp Hill, saw him speaking out on local television against violence towards gays in Harrisburg – and elsewhere – and fired him. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually agreed with his employer's decision. His trails and tribulations became a cover story on *The New Yorker* magazine. Still, no civil rights for gay and lesbian, tax-paying Pennsylvanians. Taxation without representation. For the record, in the City of Harrisburg, as in many cities nationwide, it is illegal to discriminate against gays and lesbians in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Those aren't "special rights"; they are simply the normal civilities afforded all other taxpayers.

✗ His employer... saw him speaking out on local television against violence towards gays in Harrisburg – and elsewhere – and fired him.

Elizabethtown, PA's school board embarrassed the region nationwide by banning positive portrayals of lesbians and gays. Their final policy is still homophobic, but now it recognizes single-parent families and provides for the disciplining of gay bashers. Being a single parent was too much for those professional Christers, so they wrote a policy about that "lifestyle". Our being gay worked their nerves even more. Your tax dollars at work.

The PA Superior Court doesn't like queers either. That body has ruled that gays and lesbians in the state have no standing to adopt their partners' children. In a 6–3 decision, the court said the state's adoption law does not include gays and lesbians under the definition of spouse. Since the state does not recognize same-sex marriages, the majority said, gay partners are not recognized as spouses under state law. Your tax dollars at work against you - again.

In a mean-spirited move, Governor Tom Ridge cajoled – he didn't need much elbow grease – the PA General Assembly into legislatively overturning a "same-sex" benefits policy adopted by the City of Pittsburgh that had an impact on the University of Pittsburgh. The university argued in court that no PA city has the authority to enforce human rights laws broader than the state's, which does not include sexual orientation as a protected category. Taxation without representation. Our gay tax dollars at work against us.

✗ ...a 10-year-old PA boy was abducted by his grandfather. He accused the child's caretakers of promoting a gay lifestyle...

Last year Migeul Washington, a 10-year-old PA boy was abducted by his grandfather. He accused the child's caretakers of promoting a gay lifestyle, but was eventually returned to the couple when he was surrendered to authorities by relatives. His caretakers, uncle Paul, and his partner, Timothy, were cited in a formal letter by Miguel's grandfather for having the boy "participate in ballet and gay art class" (whatever that is…) instead of baseball as his reason for removing the boy from their care.

Meanwhile, a jury didn't buy the story that a sexual overture made a young man with a violent history beat a gay invalid's head in with a hammer. A Bucks County, PA jury deadlocked on the question of life or death, so Robert Pezzeca was given a life sentence last March for the gruesome murder of a man he claimed had made a pass at him. Caught while driving his victim's car, Pezzeca eventually confessed to police. The two met when Pezzeca answered the victim's ad for a roommate to share expenses. The 21-year-old Pezzeca used a hammer to bash the victim, a 58-year-old disabled cancer patient, several times in the head - in two different rooms of the house - until he was dead. Pezzeca then used a hacksaw to dismember the body, leaving the torso in the bathtub while putting the legs and hands in trash cans.

✗ ...a young man with a violent history beat a gay invalid's head in with a hammer, alleging the victim's "pass" triggered "festering" feelings from having been sexually molested...

Pezzeca's attorney argued that then victim's alleged "pass" triggered "festering" feelings his client had from having been sexually molested at age 11 or 12. Although the prosecutor said that the victim was in fact gay, he successfully argued that Pezzeca's motives were robbery and anger at being evicted for having failed to pay his rent. The victim worked as a clothing store manager, retiring when his cancer worsened. He needed a roommate to make ends meet. The man groomed a spectacular garden, which a neighbor has tried to maintain in his memory.

In the nearby City of Brotherly Love, the national gay and lesbian advocacy group Human Rights Campaign last March awarded its highest honor, the Equality Award, to 16-year-old Michael Bisogno of Teaneck, New Jersey. After experiencing a homophobic attack outside his high school at age 14, Bisogno went on to become a highly visible national advocate against homophobia, who has appeared in national media and at last year's White House Conference on School Safety. Still, no federal or Pennsylvania civil rights. Taxation without representation.

One endeavor of the federal government, known as Healthy People 2010, due to the activism of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA), released in March the Healthy People 2010 Companion Document for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Health, a 500-page book about queer health needs and issues. What we cannot as taxpayers accomplish through "legislation", we will have to accomplish through "regulation". The document is posted on GLMA's web site, www.glma.org.

As readers scour this issue of EF, I hope to have made the connection between "civil rights" and a feeling of health and well-being. In the long run, one cannot flourish without the other.

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ACROSS THE DIVIDE from page 1

James Sawor, Chief of Staff for Pennsylvania House Rep. Carol Hill-Evans (95th District).

Reverend Sabrina Bowman, an LGBTQ+ community ally, is president of Keystone Pagan Alliance.

Working in government, Sawor sees a lot of the "us versus them" mentality. He also sees it happening in the LGBTQ+ community, which is something he really does not understand. "If we don't work together as advocates, we're hypocrites," he states. "Especially right now in relation to transgender issues. We are allied together, and we need to stand together." He believes that the community would be better served by "pulling more people under the banner." He likens it to the Philadelphia Pride Flag, which includes the brown and black stripe for diversity and inclusivity. "We should fight intolerance," Sawor says, "not each other."

When it comes to explaining his perspective without alienating others, Sawor offers a few methods.

First, "provide facts, and let the facts speak for themselves." He also suggests asking the other person "where their opinion and perspective comes from." Sawor recommends against having a perspective "solely based on opinions. You have to know how to back it with legitimate facts. Not opinionated facts like those presented on Fox & Friends or the Rachel Maddow Show." Sawor looks at it this way: "if you cannot balance the pros and cons to your argument, your work is not done and you are not ready to hold your own in a conversation." Still, he recommends not getting drawn into an argument, but just offering perspective.

For Reverend Sabrina Bowman, an LGBTQ+ community ally and president of Keystone Pagan Alliance, running into people with contrasting views is a common occurrence. "I treat everyone with the same respect when trying to communicate," Bowman explains. She recognizes that "I am not here to convince or convert them to my way of thinking. You have to be able to listen, not just to reply, but to understand so you can have an actual conversation. If you truly would like to build a bridge and mend a soul, you have to be willing to listen, not just talk and be heard."

> "We should fight intolerance, not each other."
>
> - James Sawor

She finds that people get so caught up in trying to win their side of a discussion that "they completely miss and alienate the person they wanted 'on their side.' It solves nothing." Instead, Bowman approaches discussions with an open mind and "will gently correct misconceptions, as that can be a big part of the overall picture of misunderstanding. If the other person is open to learning, I will also share my beliefs and, often times, how they correlate with their own. Finding similarities that you can agree upon will go a long way in communication overall."

One part to Bowman's understanding comes from the recognition "that not everyone is in the same place, so their reactions and thoughts are based on who they are, how they were raised, and what they want from their own lives." She takes herself out of the equation of other's opinions because "their thoughts, their actions, their beliefs… it all speaks to everything about them and nothing about me."

Sawor agrees with Bowman's point. His experience in politics and life have taught him to "understand the individuality and diversity of opinions." He too recognizes that "just because you do not live it, or have that understanding, doesn't make it wrong."

When it comes to discussing difficult topics and trying to speak across divides, Bowman offers the following advice: "If you want others to be open to hearing you, really hearing you… you have to be willing to hear them. If you truly want to communicate across the divides, you need to do just that and not have a goal to convert or change their minds." She remembers that "every person you come in contact has value. Keep that in mind and don't dismiss them just because they don't think as you do."

Sawor echoes that advice as well. He recommends that people learn to "actively listen, and to acknowledge others. Do not think about your retort while the other person is talking." Instead, he advises that people "take time to contemplate what to say in response, allowing the conversation to slow down and the anger to stop." He also notes that "the first thought that enters your mind in response is usually the wrong thing to say."

Furthermore, Sawor advises against generalizations. "Be aware of who you are talking to. Do not alienate potential allies by grouping them with everyone." He also insists upon self-care, especially when engaging in difficult conversations. "Surround yourself with things that bring you joy, and stay away from toxic topics. The happier you are, the more open minded you are." That, however, does not correlate to hiding yourself from differing opinions. "It's good to seek out other perspectives and opinions," Sawor suggests. "Just don't do it constantly."

Bowman reminds readers to "Bring the similarities to their attention that helps them better understand and be willing to help build a bridge. Everyone wants to be loved and have someone to love. It is part of what makes us all human."

Tesla Taliaferro is affiliated with Rainbow Rose Center, PFLAG York, and Spectrum York.

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TheCentralVoice.com

York LGBTQIA+ Resource Center name change: Rainbow Rose Center

By Tesla Taliaferro

Starting on January 1, 2020, the York LGBTQIA+ Resource Center will officially become the Rainbow Rose Center. All events, such as Equality Fest, Equality Fest Junior, Trans Day of Remembrance York, and Coming Out Day York will be events of the Rainbow Rose Center rather than their own entities.

You can find our new webpage at http://rainbowrosecenter.org/, though our Facebook handle @equalityfestyork will remain the same for now. You can reach us through Facebook Messenger, or via email at rainbowrosecenter@gmail.com.

We have even more exciting news to share with you all.

Our flagship festival, Equality Fest, will take place on Sunday, June 28, 2020, otherwise known as Stonewall Weekend. Equality Fest Junior will happen on May 9, 2020, Mother's Day weekend. Coming Out Day York will occur sometime in October, and Trans Day of Remembrance York in November. Details on locations and times will go onto our social media pages as they are determined.

Finally, with the start of the new decade, the Rainbow Rose Center will look to expand our program offerings. We have started with a Transgender Support Group Meeting, co-hosted with TransCentralPA, at our office within the I.D.E.A.S. Center in downtown York at 15 N. Cherry Ln, 17401 on the 4th Saturdays from 8:30-9:30 p.m. with dinner somewhere in or around downtown at 6:30 p.m. for those who'd like to join. Check out our Facebook events page for details on this and other upcoming programs.

Our Resource Specialist Volunteers will be back in the office starting Saturday, January 4. Our office hours will continue to occur on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We look forward to seeing you and assisting you.

the Central Voice.com
Central PA's LGBT News Source
Lancaster LGBTQ+ Coalition is buzzing with activity
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Where do these guys come from
LGBT Youth Group reacts to Secretary Ed's visit here
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Want to vote in this year's municipal elections? The last day to register is Oct. 7.
Morning Coffee
Cheyney partnerships: Some successful, others see no movement

Central Voice & Pennsylvania Capital-Star sharing content

Since beginning a content-sharing partnership last October, KBA member *The Central Voice* and *Pennsylvania Capital-Star* have shared numerous stories of interest to mutual and respective readers.

"Part of the mission here at the *Pennsylvania Capital-Star* is to elevate the important voices that aren't always heard as loudly as they should be in our public dialogue," the online news outlet's editor, John L. Micek, said. "And certainly, the voice of Pennsylvania's LGBT community is one that should be heard."

To date, stories and columns by Atticus Ranck, Holly Evans, and Terry Drew Karanen on the topic of on civil rights, transgender issues, maleness in the 21st century have been shared. "*CV* writers, some of whom are also KBA members, Atticus Ranck, Holly Evans, and Terry Drew Karanen.

"Our readers are interested in, and are as concerned as anyone else, about the workings of state government, politics and policy, especially in a state that has yet to pass LGBT civil rights protections," said Frank Pizzoli, founding publisher and editor, *The Central Voice*. "This content sharing arrangement advances our goal of being a more 'intersectional' media source. Regardless of who we love, we all live in this world together. Good government and good policy are inclusive."

"We appreciate the opportunity to forge this union of cooperative journalism in South Central Pennsylvania," said Joe Sukle, vice president of *The Central Voice* parent company, the Press And Journal, Inc. "Certainly this shared platform of stories between *The Central Voice* and the *Pennsylvania Capital-Star* will further our publications' continuing efforts to serve our readers and advertisers as we both strive to enlighten, expose and challenge through accurate news reporting and insightful commentary."

The *Pennsylvania Capital-Star* is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news site dedicated to honest and aggressive coverage of state government, politics and policy. The media outlet is part of The Newsroom, a 501(c)(3) public charity that supports similar news organizations in 11 states as well as a bureau in Washington D.C.

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Excellence #6: Trespass against us

Comic Watch

By Nicolas Duncan

Spencer Dales, a young man from a family of magical protectors comes into his powers late and frustrated, but with perspective that challenges the status quo. His potential is constrained by rules of a society that forces him to be unseen while protecting those who others deem worthy of his protection. As his powers excel, Spencer seeks the approval of his father, live up to the expectations of the family name, and confront the unjust rules of society.

Last issue, memories and all the feelings with them collide as Spencer deals with the aftermath from fighting with his buddy, Aaron. Meanwhile, Spencer's dad has his own regrets and demons to fight. Mr. Dales reveals two major bombshells and Monique seeks out her mission, but Spencer is wise to his father's spy. Secrets and lies may destroy the Dales family yet and there may not be a magic wand strong enough to fix the corruption. As many fathers, Mr. Dales' choices are to make his son the best of the best. However – Excellence is real and it is a two-way street; as many would say.

Review

Most fathers want the best for their children. They want their young ones to turn out to be understanding, knowledgeable adults who contribute to society. Some fathers, believing that their young adult children are too inexperienced to make decisions, pull all stops to manage their lives. They inadvertently become the "monster" who interferes with their children's activities and relationships. Others become pushy and to an extent, narcissistic; they enforce unreasonable expectations on their kids.

Excellence #6 hits the reader to the core of father and son relationship. This book speaks volumes for many young black male adults and fathers alike. The beginning of this issue, we see a flashback of the 12-year-old Brother Spencer Dales and it is so intense, that I had to pause and feel what I just read. Young Spencer struggles to cast spells while being berated by harsh adult dialogue during a magic trial. A difficult childhood is often the reason for a person's erratic ways. Throughout this book, I keep coming back to this page. Having a controlling father can wreck your nerves. However, maybe he was taught the same way as young Spencer.

Back in present day, we see Aaron waking up to his best friend's thoughts. This is an important part of the Excellence series. Being able to predict how other people might feel, act, or react is a skill that helps us build better relationships. Pick up emotional cues, often from body language, tone of voice and other non-verbal elements of communication. Listen well to what people are saying, actively checking their understanding. Show sensitivity towards others, and understand their perspectives. However, be real as @#$%. It is not wise to over-

look poor behaviors developed through a given point of view. Help other people appropriately, based on their understanding of their needs and emotions. Developing empathy, and particularly the skill of understanding others, is not just important to your interpersonal relationships, it can also have a much wider impact.

Aaron was given a gift of these skills through magic resulting from a fight with his best friend. No matter the skills acquired, like many people; Aaron's feelings of fear, regrets, and shamefulness hinders the progress of improving relationships. Spencer consistently reaches out to Aaron only to be rejected time and time again. Now, this is where things get even more interesting. Spenser is developing into a bad ass wizard with some fire in the future for the Aegis! Keep in mind that in a world with magic and manipulation, nothing is ever what it may seem. Note: Spencer has learned many tricks of the trade by his father.

Monique is successful in returning Spencer back to his father. Mr. Dales is reading Ralph Ellison's "invisible Man". Brandon Thomas has brilliantly placed a story of politically awakening with deep and profound points in black culture. If you picked up on this, you may have compared Raymond Dales as a calculated master manipulator. Mr. Dales consistently micromanages tasks on Spencer's behalf, fearing that he will make mistakes. His actions make his son feel as though he cannot be responsible for himself. It doesn't even matter; Spencer Dales "excellence" in techniques proves he is this story's bad ass hero that this story needs.

I am now a huge fan of Brandon Thomas. He writes from the soul that people need to hear and understand. As a white privileged multi-cultural dude, I have had the experience that many do not; loving and living in the black culture. There are things that can only be learned through experience…until now. Excellence is a book that speaks to the soul with open eyes. After centuries of slavery, decades of segregation, and Jim Crow, continuous of "policing" and years of false fear placed on the black community – how could one not "understand" the well-deserved sense of anger? To this day, there are statements that plague our daily lives with racism. No "one" person can speak to everyone, but Thomas brings life to comic book writing through a black male perspective in Excellence!

Khary Randolph's artwork excels a hip-hop superhero style that intrigues the imagination during the action scenes. Emilio Lopez uses beautiful bright and vivid colors to bring out the magic in each panel. It's the power of Deron Bennett lettering that draws the attention and guides the reader to connect the all aspects of this story.

Bodily and mental happiness always depend on others, because gratifying the body and mind is dependent on one's body and its culture.

Final Thoughts

The trespass against us may be hard to take in and digest. Excellence #6 is the bitter sweet life lessons that need to be absorbed.

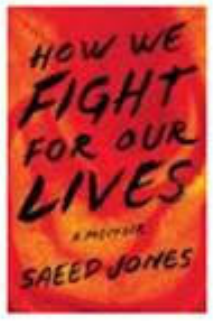
Get energized this Spring with reading

Dauphin County Library Book Reviews

By Yvonne Carmichael

It's time to shake off the winter doldrums, and that's easy to do by trying one or more of these titles from The Dauphin County Library. You'll find that this edition's selections range from the recently released to others that you might have forgotten. Plus, we have titles for everyone in your family. Do you like to read or listen to titles on a tablet or smart device? No problem. We have thousands of titles to choose from that's just right for your electronic device. Remember, the Dauphin County Library System has lots of titles to enjoy. Find out by either visiting us in person or online at www.dcls.org.

How We Fight For Our LIves, by Saeed Jones



"In this highly anticipated memoir, writer and poet Jones begins with the influence of James Baldwin and what it means to create an alternate version of oneself. He describes a childhood spent alternating between the suburbs of Dallas with his mother, and summers in Memphis with his evangelical grandmother. With lyrical writing, Jones shows the impact of lingering silence around sexuality; gay was an unspoken word in either home. This is all set against the backdrop of the deaths of James Byrd Jr. and Matthew Shepard in 1998—if being black can get you killed and so can being gay, what does it mean to be black and gay? Throughout, Jones tells of slipping away from his mother and grandmother, of wanting a sense of newfound freedom. While college allowed this, it came with a physical and mental cost. An unforgettable memoir that pulls you in and doesn›t let go until the very last page."

#Pride: Championing LGBTQ Rights, by Rebecca Felix

Introduces readers to the pride movement, from the beginnings at the Stonewall Riots to the LGBTQ rights movement, thfirst pride parade, the creation of the rainbow flag, and legislation such as the Matthew Shephard Act and the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage." This book is written for juvenile readers.

A Wild and Precious Life: A Memoir, by Edie Windsor; with Joshua Lyon

"In this memoir, which [Edie] began before passing away in 2017 and completed by her co-writer, Edie recounts her childhood in Philadelphia, her realization that she was a lesbian, and her active social life in Greenwich Village›s electrifying underground gay scene during the 1950s. Edie was also one of a select group of trailblazing women in computing, working her way up the ladder at IBM and achieving their highest technical ranking while developing software. In the early 1960s Edie met Thea, an expat from a Dutch Jewish family that fled the Nazis, and a widely respected clinical psychologist. Their partnership lasted forty-four years, until Thea died in 2009. Edie found love again, marrying Judith Kasen-Windsor in 2016.
A Wild and Precious Life is a remarkable portrait of an iconic woman, gay life in New York in the second half of the twentieth century, and the rise of LGBT activism."

Please see **GET ENERGIZED,** page **20**

Open Stage mounts ambitious 2-part production of Angels in America

By Frank Pizzoli

"I enjoy the challenge of it all," said Stuart Landon, Producing Artistic Director of Open Stage. And his upcoming production of the iconic play by Tony Kushner *Angels in America,* Part 1 & Part 2 is indeed a worthy challenge.

"*Angels in America* is one of the most important plays of the 20th century," Landon said, explaining that "the sheer size of the production requires a big cast, special effects, and multiple layers of talent that must come together each performance."

Why Angels?

The play, Landon said, "gives us glimpse into the recent past, a chance to look at the situations presented." Having won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Tony Award for Best Play, and the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play, *Angels* premiered in 1991 and its Broadway opening was in 1993.

Complex, often metaphorical, and at times a symbolic examination of AIDS and homosexuality in America in the 1980s, Landon points out that the play allows audiences to see into several storylines, some of which occasionally intersect.

"It's important for us to ask the big questions, the ones without easy answers."

-Stuart Landon

Certain major and minor characters are supernatural beings are angels or deceased persons or ghosts. The play contains multiple roles for several of the actors. Initially and primarily focusing on a Manhattan gay couple, the play also has several other storylines, and that's where the story intersections occur.

In order to capture the zeitgeist of the play's setting, members of the community active during the early AIDS Crisis spent time with cast members, many younger and therefore acting out parts without similar lived experiences.

There are two parts to the play which will be presented separately by Open Stage, although the play can also be presented as one show. The parts are entitled *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika,* respectively. They have been adapted into an HBO miniseries of the same title. The *Seattle Times* listed the series as among "Best of the filmed AIDS portrayals" on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of AIDS. Playwright John M. Clum called *Angels* "a turning point in the history of gay drama, the history of American drama, and of American literary culture."

Considering the length and breathe of the play, Landon said,"It's important for us to ask the big questions, the ones without easy answers."

Plays like *Angels*, he noted "Help us understand that people are messy, the past is messy, and times in which we live are messy." Still, though all the messiness, "We can see legitimate parallels or departures to the present."

Landon's read and reread the play and in the spirit of the script he's asked himself, and hopes audiences will ask Where do each of us see ourselves in the drama taking place before our eyes? An angel? Caregiver? Lover? Then? Now? In the future?

Angels will be presented against the backdrop of a re-imagined facility, now with a lounge and newly curated spaces for a variety of creative activities.

INFO - openstagehbg.com

Who is Stuart Landon?

Stuart Landon, Producing Artistic Director at Open Stage was born an Okie, reared a Texan, and schooled a Sooner, Stuart has been a proud resident of Harrisburg since 2007. Some of his favorite Open Stage credits include Fun Home, Carrie the Musical, Sondheim on Sondheim, Frost/Nixon, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, and The Normal Heart. Landon has also worked at the Capital Area School for the Arts, Allenberry Playhouse, Millbrook Playhouse, Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma City, Findlay Summer Stock, and Houston's Theatre Under the Stars. He also serves as Director or Community Engagement for Midtown Cinema, Harrisburg.

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April 3rd-May 7th:
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- Reception April 3rd, 5-8 pm
- Music by Jonathan Frazier

Week of April 13th:
Spring Classes for Youth & Adults Begin
- Visit our new website to register!

April 25th, 6-11 pm:
"2020 Vision Gala" at the Country Club of Harrisburg
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Wellness, clothes & food on Alder Health's radar

By Louie Marven

Thirty-five years after springing up as an all-volunteer AIDS assistance agency, Alder Health Services now boasts a full slate of services that offers Wellness Programs, a Clothing Room, and a Food Pantry.

Historically, Lancaster AIDS Project and South Central AIDS Assistance Network years later combined into AIDS Community Alliance. Then ACA evolved into Alder Health Services, today offering case management and support services, health and wellness education, and physical and mental health services.

On Sept. 25, Alder Health celebrates its 35th anniversary with a event at The Whitaker Center. "A strength of Alder Health is its ability to re-invent itself over time based on the needs of the community. THE 35th anniversary event gives us a chance to highlight and to celebrate our responsiveness," says Alder Health CEO Rosemary Browne.

Wellness Center

A Wellness Center at Alder Health Services had been on a wish list of staff, patients, and clients for many years. Everyone involved noticed a growing need for LGBTQ+ community members to have their own space where they felt comfortable participating in wellness activities without being judged. In fall of 2018 in partnership with Aetna Better Health, the Wellness Center opened.

Community members can participate in all sorts of programs and activities designed to engage their minds, bodies, and spirits. It is a safe and supportive space where individuals can care for themselves beyond their physical well-being.

Class topics are diverse, ranging from yoga and meditation to financial literacy, and nutrition. Alder Health sees wellness as broad and holistic, rather than just a chance to exercise.

Equipped with an Outdoor Recreation Management degree, Noah Penny is the Wellness Coordinator. He wants the queer community to feel liberated, not assimilated. As a non-binary trans man, Penny strongly values the life changing and healing benefits of wellness and recreational activities that are accessible and enjoyable for all.

"We are trying to look at the larger picture of wellness, offering programs on topics like financial literacy, art exploration, and healthy relationships in addition to our physical wellness programming," says Penny. It goes beyond what is a more limited idea of physical fitness. "Although you see our space full of fitness equipment, we say wellness and not fitness intentionally."

Penny references a number of different ways Alder Health makes these programs accessible to everyone in diverse LGBTQ+ communities. "There are non-gendered bathrooms for changing," he explains, "and two elevators as we are located on the second floor."

"Historically, sports, fitness, and recreation spaces have been unwelcoming and often actively dangerous for LGBTQ+ people," he adds, pointing out that "there is a lot that plays into who gets the time and space to focus on their wellbeing" and that LGBTQ+ people have typically not been able to find safe, inclusive programming like that which Alder Health offers.

And on the topic of financial accessibility, "we operate on a pay-as-you-can basis, ensuring that no one will ever be turned away for a lack of funds."

"We added Wellness programming because the first health priority is preventing illness," Browne, says. "Our Wellness resources reflect a welcoming embrace of LGBTQ+ individuals. We offer a safe environment to be yourself as you pursue your health goals."

The Wellness Center also has a number of guidelines to help keep it an accessible and welcoming space. The guidelines include a reminder that "all bodies are good bodies, and wellness is about feeling good," and expectations around respect, like taking good care of the equipment and not assuming anyone's pronouns.

"Due to stigma, institutional bias, discrimination, and a huge lack of clinical research of LGBT health-related issues, our communities are often forced into a reactive approach when it comes to our health," Penny says, giving context to the need for these programs. Getting personal, he added that "taking an active role in my personal wellness... feels like a small act of resistance. We know that 'they' don't want us to be well, or even here at all really. I think about the Reagan Administration and the AIDS epidemic in the '80s. I really feel like a healthy, vital, and thriving LGBTQ+ community is resistance in of itself." Two monikers from the early AIDS crisis were: Silence = Death and Piss 'em Off - Survive.

Penny says that trauma-informed yoga has been the most popular activity since opening the Wellness Center. A lot of people asked for the self-defense classes that just started, and he expects that to be quite popular as well. If people have suggestions for other activities, he welcomes their input: "Anyone can reach out to me at any time at noah@alderhealth.org, I would love to hear what people want to see!"

Food Pantry

Hunger is a problem in our country, and the LGBTQ+ community struggles with higher rates of food insecurity than the rest of Americans. 1 in 4 LGBTQ+ adults could not afford to feed themselves or their families at least once in the past year. LGBTQ+ adults may face employment discrimination and higher rates of being uninsured, which can lead to food insecurity.

At Alder Health Services, "We believe in a holistic approach to health, and we know that food insecurity exacerbates many chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, depression, and results

Please see **ALDER HEALTH,** page **13**

Noah Penny is Alder Health Services Wellness Coordinator.

ALDER HEALTH from page 12

in poor health outcomes for individuals living with HIV," explains Liz Leen, Marketing & Resource Development Coordinator.

Alder Health is slowly building up their Food Pantry that will serve clients and community members. "We are stocking our Food Pantry with a focus on healthy options to reduce those adverse health outcomes," Leen says.

"I'm not sure it's understood just how tentative food security is for some people, especially LGBTQ+ people," Browne points out. The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law finds that the queer community experiences more food insecurity at higher rates than non-LGBTQ+ adults. This is consistent with data that show LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to be poor and face higher rates of poverty than heterosexuals. Readers interested in donating can do so by visiting Alder Health's web site.

Clothing Market

Another of Alder Health's services started years ago as a clothing swap and has evolved into a permanent free clothing market. The point of this service is for queer and transgender people to have access to clothing that allows them to truly express who they are, in a way that matches someone's identity and orientation.

"Although not exclusively queer, clothing swaps are really popular in trans communities for a variety of reasons," says Penny, "avoiding the uncomfortable store changing rooms, free clothes, and really clothing swaps are often all about coming together in community."

"We have a firm foundation within the transgender community, here in our region and beyond, through our Primary Care Services. Adding a Clothing Market allows for a dignified and safe way for transitioning or transitioned individuals, and other non-binary folks, to find free clothing that best reflects their gender identity and expression. And have some fun in the process," Browne says.

Speaking again from his own personal experience, "when I first came out as transgender, I got a lot of my first 'masculine' outfits from clothing swaps, I felt safer getting my clothes in that environment, where I knew no one would say anything, and nothing upsetting was going to happen."

The need goes beyond expression, of course. "In addition to gender affirmation and community, a lot of people just straight up need clothes, especially in these winter months, the number of people who come to get the clothing they need skyrockets."

The clothing closet is overseen by Alder's Mpower project. Donations of new items are welcome, and currently there is a need for base layer donations, polyester/nylon undershirts and pants for enduring cold weather. Larger sizes are a particular need. To volunteer with the clothing closet, contact Sam Rynearson at sam@alderhealth.org.

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Will PA plan for universal paid family leave ever become law?

By Elizabeth Hardison
Pennsylvania Capital-Star

When Jackie Swain's infant daughter, Emersyn, was diagnosed with a rare heart disease in 2018, the Montgomery County resident took a sobering look at the options before her.

Swain could hire someone to care for Emersyn while she and her husband worked. Or she could quit her job as a cake decorator, which paid an hourly wage, and be with her daughter full-time.

Swain and her husband, Chris Sheeder, took the second option, according to Sen. Maria Collett, D-Montgomery, who represents the couple in the state Senate. Sheeder worked as many hours as he could at his landscaping job to pay for Emersyn's medical care.

Emersyn died when she was just seven months old. On Tuesday, Collett said the Swains' brief time with their daughter was made even more anguishing by the difficult choices they had to make to pay for her care.

Collett says a bill she's sponsoring with Sen. Dan Laughlin, R-Erie, that calls for universal paid family leave for Pennsylvanians, would have prevented it.

The legislation would make small deductions from workers' paychecks to fund an insurance program, run by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, which would pay out benefits to public and private-sector employees who take medical leave from work.

Eligible workers could earn up to 90 percent of their income for up to 20 weeks while they recover from an illness, care for a new child, or nurse a sick family member.

Supporters of the Family Care Act rally in the state Capitol on Tuesday, Jan. 28.
CAPITAL-STAR PHOTO BY ELIZABETH HARDISON.

Reps. Wendi Thomas, R-Bucks, and Dan Miller, D-Allegheny, are sponsoring a companion bill in the House.

Despite its bipartisan support, the legislation faces an uphill battle in both Republican-controlled chambers. Republicans say the mandatory deductions from workers' paychecks constitute a new tax that would hurt small businesses and families.

Even so, some Republicans think the time is right to look at universal family leave for Pennsylvania, a state where senior citizens are growing in rank and where young adults shoulder some of the country's largest student loan debts.

The Senate Labor and Industry held a two-hour public hearing on the bill on Tuesday, a step signifying there's at least some will to seriously consider the proposal.

"A lot of people understand you shouldn't have to lose your job, your home, everything, because of an illness," the committee's chairwoman, Sen. Camera Bartolotta, R-Washington, said. "The question is … is this bill the way to do it?"

State level solutions

Thousands of Pennsylvanians who work for the federal government gained access to a paid family leave program when Congress approved a bill in December offering 12 weeks of paid parental leave to federal employees.

But across the Commonwealth, less than half of Pennsylvanians qualify for federal protections that let them take unpaid leave for a medical emergency. Research shows many employees don't take unpaid leave because they can't afford it.

Nationwide, only 17 percent of civilian workers have access to paid family leave programs, the U.S. Department of Labor says.

In the absence of federally mandated paid family leave, more states are creating their own programs for workers. State-run insurance funds such as the one being proposed in Pennsylvania are already in six states across the country, including neighboring New York and New Jersey.

Proponents say they increase access to paid family leave programs, which have been shown to improve infant health and keep caregivers — most of whom are women — in the workforce long-term.

Small business owners such as Rich Garland, who owns an insurance firm

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in Bethlehem, Lehigh County, say state-supported programs can help them retain employees, saving money on training and recruitment.

"Both the business owner and the employee pay heavily" for medical leave, Garland told the Labor and Industry committee Tuesday. "I think you have an opportunity to help."

But not everyone agrees that the government should administer family leave programs.

Sam Marshall, President and CEO of the Pennsylvania Insurance Federation, told lawmakers Tuesday that they should "focus on building the private market for paid family and medical leave."

That may mean offering tax incentives to private employers that offer leave policies, Marshall said, or allowing the insurance industry to craft private insurance programs for medical leave.

The National Conference of State Legislatures, which tracks statehouse policy trends across the United States, says four states have proposed tax credits for employers who let workers take paid family leave. None of them have become law.

Rebecca Oyler, legislative director of the National Federation of Independent Business in Pennsylvania, said the employers she represents roundly oppose the state-run medical leave proposal.

She said employers should have the flexibility to offer benefits tailored to their workplaces and employees. She also said some workers may not want to pay into the insurance fund, preferring to "keep their cash" instead.

The proposals in Pennsylvania would deduct earnings from workers' wages at a rate of .588 cents on the dollar.

For a household earning Pennsylvania's median annual income of $60,000, that works out to roughly $352 per year, or $13.56 from each biweekly paycheck.

Laughlin told the Capital-Star Tuesday leaders in his Republican caucus are "lukewarm" on the bill since it would take money from workers.

But the Erie County lawmaker, whose reelection campaign this year is drawing national attention from Democratic groups that want to flip his seat, said he doesn't view the mandatory deductions as a tax.

He sees them as an investment in a worker's future, since most people will, at some point, need to take time off work for a medical event.

"People buy fire insurance on their homes, and almost nobody ever needs that," Laughlin said. "This is something nearly every worker will need at some point in their life, because very few of us lead these charmed lives where nothing goes wrong."

Pennsylvania Capital-Star, where this story first appeared, and The Central Voice are content-sharing partners.

Testament to 15th and 19th amendment

By Cassie Miller
Pennsylvania Capital-Star

Recently, a small crowd gathered in the Capitol's main Rotunda for the news that Harrisburg would be getting a new monument.

The new monument will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the passage of the 15th amendment and the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, which granted the right to vote, respectively to African Americans and women.

The monument will also honor the legacy of the Old 8th Ward, a black neighborhood in Harrisburg of nearly 11,000 homes that was razed to make way for the Capitol complex expansion in the early 1900s.

By June, a bronze fixture will occupy the vacant corner of 4th and Walnut streets.

The statute will depict four figures. Jacob Compton, a member of the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War and coachmen to Simon Cameron; Thomas Chester, a war correspondent and lawyer during the Civil War; Abolitionist and editor, William Howard Day and Frances Harper Abolitionist and women's rights advocate.

Speakers at the event said Harper's likeness will be handing the 15th amendment document back to an unspecified man, as if to say that there's "still work to be done" to include women.

State Sen. Sharif Street, D-Philadelphia, said the monument will be a testament to progress.

"Progress can be made, and has been made," he said.

Auditor General Eugene DePasquale called the monument "long overdue."

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A celebration of gender diversity

Trans Central PA Topics

By Holly Evans

The 12th annual Keystone Conference, A Celebration of Gender Diversity, is now upon us. One of the largest conferences of its type, and it is held here in Harrisburg Pa. This is not only the best educational and informative conference of its type, focused on transgender issues, it's a time of fun and feeling good about yourself. A chance to see old friends.

If you are Trans female, it's an opportunity to let your hair down, put on that special outfit, strap on your heels and simply be yourself. For the Trans Men, a chance to learn about the latest advancements, be yourself and see plenty of friends as well.

Over the years of attending the Keystone Conference I have had the opportunity to meet and get to know so many wonderful loving and caring people. I remember learning of the conference and how I looked forward to attending for the first time. I remember walking into the hotel for my first conference and being both nervous and excited all at once. Everywhere I looked I saw so many others like myself who's story sounded so familiar. I could not believe that I had found a place where so many people, like myself gathered, to have fun, to learn about the issues we face as transgender individuals and to learn that we don't need to face these alone.

Keystone is where I learned of the resources out there to help me and others like myself. Not only was I able to learn more about makeup, clothing and nails, I found workshops on things such as the history of transgender individuals in society, electrolysis treatments, traveling while trans. And though I was not living full time as a transgender woman at the time, I learned that it was ok to fly across this country as my authentic self, and how to prepare so that I could. It was at Keystone where I learned how to have my name legally changed, including having my drivers licensed or my social security card information changed to reflect who I truly was, if I so desired.

In addition to the various workshops, the conference provides numerous venders focused on a wide range of issues which are of interest to the transgender community. These include representatives from places such as ACLU and NGLCC, to provide information on legal matters and employment advice. Other vendors such as therapists, doctors and medical personnel focusing on helping those who wish to have surgical procedures to assist them with their transition. Other venders focus on teaching attendees with their presentation or voice.

Whenever I attended my first conference, not only did I find workshops and educational opportunities, I found this surrounded in an atmosphere of fun and excitement. To learn that there was so much interest in such a conference that we commandeered the entire hotel for the week and that we even needed to expand to the neighboring hotels as there were so many people interested in attending.

I was amazed at all the social activities that Keystone had planned for us and how it allowed me to get out and experience things that I never thought possible. We would travel by bus to local restaurants in the Harrisburg area for dinner with other transgender individuals. Local retailers would work with the conference organizers to create an open and inviting atmosphere for many of the first-time attendees and arrange special shopping hours. Busses would then take groups of guests out shopping who otherwise could not get out to shop at home or were afraid to shop on their own. This provided a safe, secure experience to try on new clothes and find that special outfit. I know that I grew so much that year and had so much fun at my first conference that I didn't want it to end. I remember staying up late talking and sharing stories with the new friends I made and that I didn't want to go to sleep.

And when the conference was over, and it was time to go home, I could not wait for the next Keystone Conference to start.

Every year since attending my first conference, when I return, I get the opportunity to meet new people like myself, who are attending their first conference and seeing the excitement in their eyes. That excitement of the first-time attendees learning about so much in such a short time. Knowing that for many, they are finally having the opportunity to be their true authentic self. To see them open and grow as individuals, learning that it is ok to be transgender. For me it's always a joy seeing old friends and catching up, especially with those I only get to see once a year. But this is just a part of why I continue to go back. For me now, the biggest reason I continue to return is to know that at Keystone I can help others just as those before helped me. That I can give back to the transgender community. That through Keystone I can touch the lives and help so many more people in such a positive way. I can help those who are finally coming to understand what they have been dealing with all their lives.

If you are transgender and can attend the Keystone conference this year, please try to attend. If you have been there before, then you know all about the educational programs, the social activities, the friends you make and all the fun times.

This year's conference will be held from March 25, 2020 to March 29, 2020 at the Harrisburg Hershey Sheraton Inn. For more information please see keystone-conference.org. I look forward to seeing you there.

Holly Evans is President of TransCentral Pa.

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A voice for respect, Bill Krenz earns well-due recognition

By Carolyn Kimmel

If there is one word that Bill Krenz wants to encourage and model for others, it's respect.

"Penn State Health is a solid force here in central Pennsylvania for inclusion and affirmation, but there's always room for improvement," said Krenz, who is an administrative associate for Community Health, Department of Nursing and Nursing Education at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and one of the leaders of the LGBTQ and Allies Affinity Resource Network Group at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

Krenz

Krenz co-leads monthly meetings and communications for the 250-member group, along with Dr. Katie Dalke, an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and a member of Gov. Tom Wolf's Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs. Krenz and Dalke work closely with the Penn State Health Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Penn State College of Medicine student PRIDE Group to continue to create a safe space for employees, patients and students.

"I want Penn State Health to constantly improve and become a leader for welcoming LGBTQ patients and their families. I also want LGBTQ employees to be happy working here and help employees who have family members coming out," he said.

For consistently demonstrating Penn State Heath's values in every project he takes on, Krenz received one of three Steve and Sharon Baron Leadership Awards given in 2019.

Krenz's nomination embodies the true spirit of the Baron Leadership Awards, according to the awards committee.

"Bill's work as a leader for the LGBTQ and Allies Affinity Resource Network Group demonstrated teamwork and exemplified exceptional personal achievement," the committee said. "He is a valued member of both the nursing department as well as the community relations team. His nomination demonstrated that Bill most certainly makes a lasting impact on those who have the privilege of working with him."

In his administrative post for the Department of Nursing, Krenz assists the director of nursing education and professional development, and he supports the director of community health. He spends much of his time coordinating logistics and volunteers for events and, during the past year, provided key administrative support to a new shared governance model between nursing staff and nursing leadership.

"Bill is an exceptional employee, and his commitment to diversity highlights both his character, strong work ethic and empathy for others," said Judy Dillon, recently retired director of community health. "Bill is a team player and a leader who is making a lasting difference, and this award is a small way to say thank you for his positive contributions to Penn State Health."

Penn State Health and College of Medicine have a commitment to inclusivity for LGBTQ patients, employees and students, which earned the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center recognition as a top performer by the Human Rights Campaign Health Equality Index for its patient and employee initiatives in 2018 and again in 2019, said Lynette Chappell-Williams, chief diversity officer at Penn State Health.

An organizationwide LGBTQ task force, which includes external experts on LGBTQ issues, faculty members with expertise in LGBTQ health issues, members of the COM student Pride group and representatives from the LGBTQ affinity group, is dedicated to identifying strategies for being more inclusive of LGBTQ patients, employees and students, Chappell-Williams said. The task force recently worked to establish the ability for patients to be called by their preferred (chosen) name in their medical records – and eventually their preferred pronouns.

"This is the first of many future steps our health system has taken to be a leader in addressing health care needs and health disparities of our LGBTQ communities," she said.

In her nomination of Krenz for the award, Rose Barron, administrative coordinator of public health services at the College of Medicine, highlighted Krenz's ongoing commitment to LGBTQ affirmation both at Hershey Medical Center and in the community, referencing his involvement with Central PA's LGBT Chamber of Commerce, Alder Health Services, the LGBT Center of Central PA and TransCentralPA.

"All of these experiences allow him to develop relationships that enhance his leadership role as well as support and promote Penn State Health in the local LGBTQ community," Barron said.

For those who don't find it as easy as he does to promote acceptance and affirmation, Krenz encourages them to find their voice. "Be more involved in LGBTQ activities in your workplace and urge your company to make it better for their LGBTQ workers, customers, whomever they serve," he said.

Krenz urges everyone to find one thing they are passionate about and donate time to it.

"Everyone should give back in one way or another," he said. "You get back as much as you give."

When he's not working or volunteering, Krenz and husband Matthew Meehan enjoy socializing with friends, camping and working in the yard of their home on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Dauphin.

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Making Sense of Life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

"Oh … My … God – He's perfect for me!" "Just wait till you meet her!" "I've always admired this amazing couple, and now they want to add ME to their family – how totally hot it THAT?!?"

Ah … the glorious rush of infatuation. Sure, we might think we're falling in love, but it's probably not the case. Falling in lust, yes. Falling in love right away? Probably not.

Yet there are plenty of cases where two people met, sensed an immediate attraction, and became partners or spouses within a very short period of time. Many of those relationships have stood the test of time and adversity. So how do we know if the man, woman, or couple of our dreams is perfect for us?

Madisyn Taylor recently wrote, "We cannot truly connect with a person when we idealize them. In life, there are no pedestals – we are all walking on the same ground together. When we realize this, we can own our own divinity and our humanity. This is the key to balance and wholeness within ourselves and our relationships."

Funny thing about those first few weeks of new love: We can be like a horse with blinders, idealizing our newly-found, potential mate. We focus on our similarities and totally ignore the differences. One young man I know was dating a guy he thought was "the one." The first time he drove with the guy in his car he quickly found out his new beau hated country music. "UGH!" said Mr. Perfect, "You don't actually listen to that shit do you?"

The young man did … actually. In fact, he was an award-winning country line dancer and two-stepper. Lunch was quiet, cue curtain, relationship over before it really started.

Years ago, a counseling client of mine had been so excited about a new man in his life. They were seriously dating, not just having sex, and had found so very many similar interests to enjoy together. The next week he came into my office looking quite dejected. "Wanna tell me about it?" I queried.

"Oh, nothing, but I broke up with Andrew. He just doesn't have all the qualities I want in a partner." I was surprised since things had been going well. "He just didn't make the List," explained my client. Turns out he had 20 must-have qualities in a potential mate.

Andrew failed to pass muster – he only scored 19 out of 20. Yes, I'm serious. I am not making this up.

So often we find someone we think fits the bill for us, but there can be a couple of nagging issues we just don't want to accept. He snores. She drinks a little too much at times. He doesn't wipe the rim of the toilet after he pees. They make plans without including us.

The answer? Why, of course, the erring member must change to fit our pictures! How clearly we see that, no?!? There are very few (if any) relationships where the couple or partners agree on everything. How boring would that be, anyway? It's been said that if we're exactly the same as our partner then one of us is superfluous. Differences are just as enriching to a relationship as are similarities.

It's communication – not behavioral therapy changes, manipulation, or coercion – in which we must engage If our beloved has a tick or habit that bothers us. Successful relationships are those when partners accept each other for who they are, not for who they want each other to be. I stand by this quote I first penned over two decades ago:

You cannot have a relationship with someone's potential.

This also means we may not be everyone's cup of tea and that's just fine. If that's the case, best to allow those relationships and connections to dissolve organically. So why do we cling to the people who no longer support our vision of life by encouraging us, uplifting us, and loving us, particularly when we're trying so hard to be there for them?

Because the other side of that equation is that while we're "working on someone else" or trying to force them to change, the work we ought to be doing on ourselves goes right in the toilet.

It's time once again that we all stepped back from the world around us, looked in the mirror one more time, and figured out what we have to give to the world, as well as what we want out of life. Don't you deserve to have a life worth living with people around you who celebrate YOU?!?

Terry is licensed social worker in private practice in Carlisle, a speaker, and award-winning author – find his books on Amazon. Contact him at: terry@terrydrewkaranen.com

WHAT A DIFFERENCE from page 1

For the first five years of the decade it took to pass civil rights protections, Bullett "wrote letters to the borough council and the town's largest employers. "I never received replies," he explains.

"I attended nearly every monthly borough council meeting for two years. I spoke at each one about the ordinance," Bullett said. And, regardless of the venue, if given the opportunity to speak, he usually spoke about the ordinance. "I was throwing seeds everywhere I could, hoping that one would take root."

Was Bullett surprised who came out to support or defeat passage?

"The one group that surprised me was senior citizens from Westminster Woods, our local retirement community. Many are transplants so they could very easily keep to themselves," Bullett said. But a few were active with Diversity Huntingdon – Everyone is Welcome Here! since it formed nearly two years ago."

Surprising to Bullett is that "we did not have the support of the business community as represented by the Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce (HCCC) and the Huntingdon County Business and Industry (HCBI)." HCCC never responded to his communications. "I was told by HCBI that they did not see any business interest in the ordinance."

Regarding the run up to the 4-3 vote, Bullett said advocates "made several attempts to meet with borough council members who voted No so we could hear their concerns." Rebuffed in their attempts, advocates found No voters were often absent from committee and workshop meetings where the eventually successful ordinance was discussed. "I am also disappointed that this is still a thing in the 21st century. In the 1960s, my late father was part of the Huntingdon Equality League which was a coalition of African Americans, college faculty and clergy formed to eradicate discrimination in Huntingdon. We should have learned the lessons of discrimination back then," Bullett laments.

Other no shows?

Bullett was "disappointed that more the LGBT community did not come out. I am not sure just how large the community is, but while there were transgender people and lesbians included in our group, adult gay males were noticeably absent." Bullet describes himself as a gay man.

Future plans?

Bullett's perseverance has set other activity into motion. He's been challenged by a borough council member John Hyde to have a Pride parade next year. "Hopefully, we can work with Juniata College students and add this as a preceding activity to the Pride Festival held on campus in September."

He'll also continue assisting with passage of The Fairness Act at the state level and the Equality Act at the federal level. "Most of all, I will just attempt to live my life authentically," Bullett said.

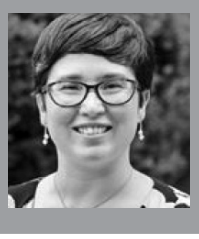
Who is Anthony Bullett?

Anthony Bullett was born and raised in Huntingdon, Pa. and was graduated from Huntingdon Area High School. He earned a Liberal Arts Bachelor degree (1983) from University of Pennsylvania and a Master's of Public Administration in Public Finance from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University a year later. He began his professional career as a Pennsylvania Management Intern in Harrisburg, then moved to New Jersey where he spent 25 years working in the public and private sectors on public finance projects, including serving as a financial advisor on more than $1 billion worth of public bonds and notes. Bullett came back to Huntingdon 10 years ago to help care for his aging mother. Since back in his hometown, he's completed the Leadership Huntingdon County program (2012). He makes time to serve as organist and choir director for the Huntingdon Presbyterian Church, as a Democratic Party Committeeperson and as an Executive Board member of the Huntingdon County Democratic Committee. He is a founding member of the Huntingdon County Juneteenth Celebration Committee. Juneteenth is an annual observance on June 19 to remember when Union soldiers enforced the Emancipation Proclamation and freed all remaining slaves in Texas on June 19, 1865. This day is an opportunity for people to celebrate freedom and equal rights in the United States.

GLO staff and Youth Advisory Board members following the ribbon-cutting on Nov. 18, 2019. | PHOTO PROVIDED WITH PERMISSION FROM GABE TAYLOR.

Introducing GLO drop-in center

LGBT Center of Central PA



By Amanda Arbour

If you drive past the corner of 3rd & Hamilton Streets, you'll see GLO - Harrisburg's first community center by and for men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans women of color ages 14-29. Based on the Project Silk model out of Pittsburgh, this drop-in center is a recreational space, an HIV/STI testing site, and a resource center for counseling and social services.

I first learned about the Project Silk model in the summer of 2018, when I reached out to Valley Youth House looking for housing resources for a participant. The center was in the final stages of writing our 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, and this model aligned perfectly with our strategic focus on Community Building, Racial Justice, Mental Health, and Housing.

We were not alone in our interest, and soon found ourselves at the table with three other partner organizations - UPMC Pinnacle, Valley Youth House, and Hamilton Health Center. After over a year of intensive work to make this project a reality, we were proud to stand together at GLO's ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 18, 2019.

I am thrilled that the center is a part of this new and exciting collaborative program, which fills a critical need in our communities, and I want to name three important things that make GLO unique.

Unapologetic Space

First, GLO is an unapologetic, dedicated space designed by and for young trans women of color and young men who have sex with men of color, who are the priority communities for this program.

We know that the vast majority of our LGBTQ+ spaces, in Harrisburg and across the country, are created by and for white people and prioritize the needs of white people - further marginalizing LBGTQ+ people of color. That is why it is so critical for there to be a space here specifically for men who have sex with men and trans women of color to create community and access services.

This kind of space does not exist anywhere else in Harrisburg. For those of us who are white or who don't identify as part of those communities, it is important that we respect this space and recognize that it is not FOR us - is it for those who live at these intersections of identity.

Participant-Led Space

Second, GLO is participant-led-informed by and accountable to a dynamic group of young people from the priority communities. In January of 2019, we held focus groups to learn: 1) if there was a need for the Project Silk model in Harrisburg, and 2) how they would want to see it implemented.

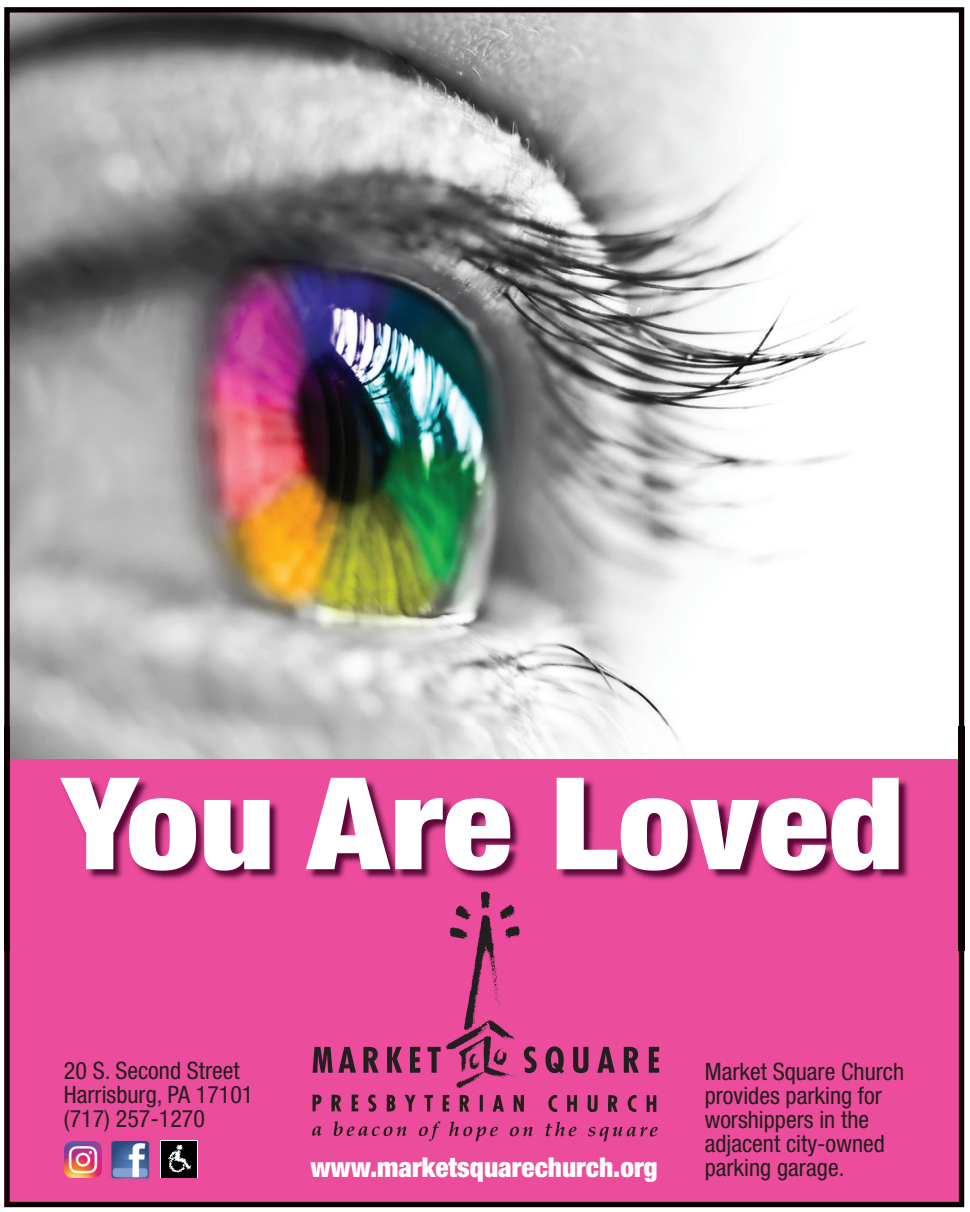
From those initial conversations, the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) was born - with members meeting monthly since the spring of 2019 to provide guidance on all aspects of the program - which they named GLO. They participated in site visits and staff interviews, set the hours of operations and the methods of engagement, selected paint colors and furniture, and advised on programming.

I have appreciated getting to know some of the YAB members and learning from them, and I was thrilled that we got to present them with the Rising Star Award at FAB this fall. I continue to be so impressed with the passion, insight, and dedication that each of them brings to GLO.

Collaborative Space

Finally, GLO is a collaborative space. We would not be here today if our funders at the University of Pittsburgh had not had the foresight to invite all four organizations who had applied for the grant to come to the table and develop GLO together - and if each of us had not said "yes".

Please see **INTRODUCING GLO,** page **20**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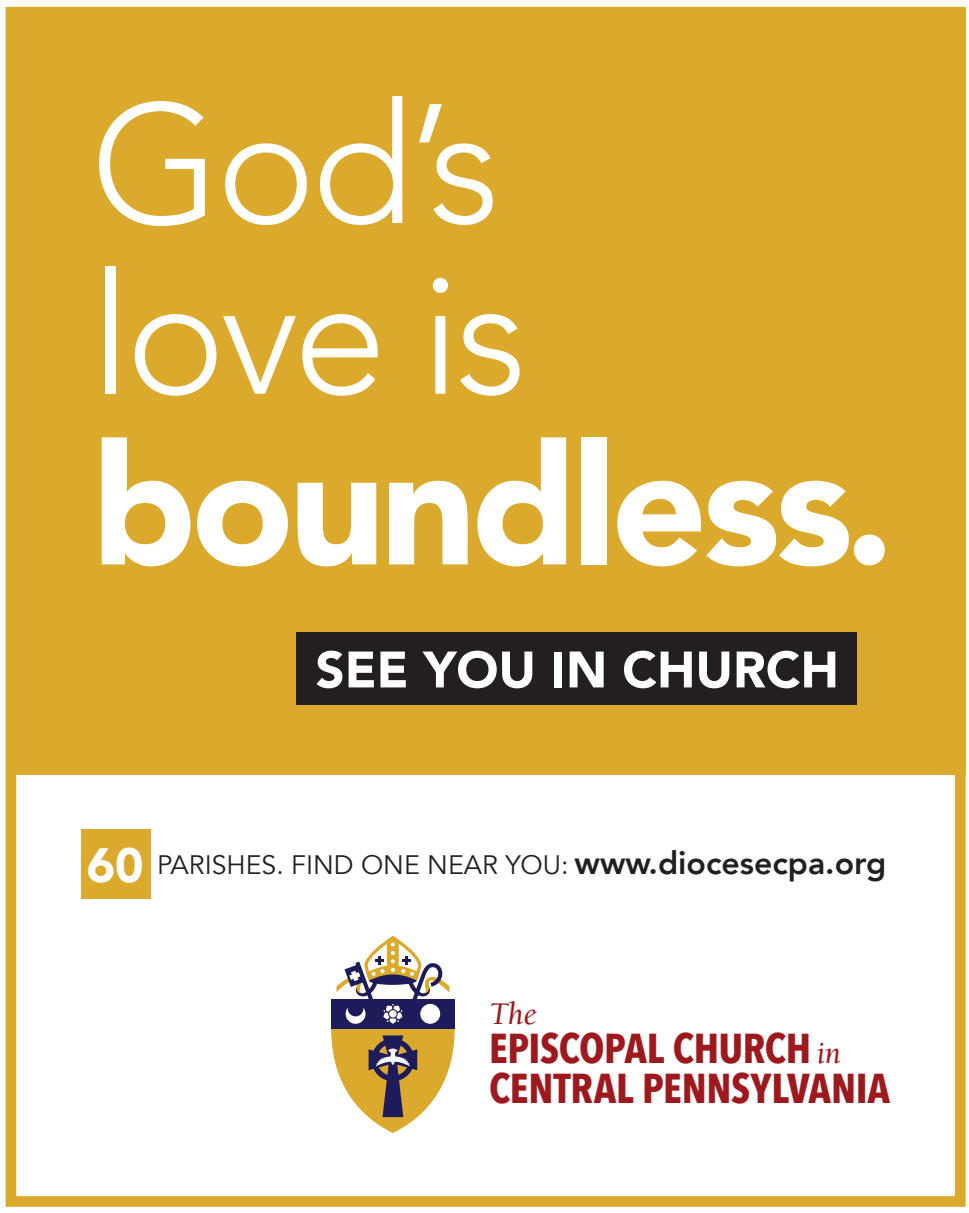
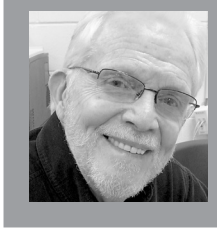


Don't panic! LGBTQIA+ is just fine

Ally in the Academy



By Trum Simmons

A column by Brad Polumbo last fall in the online magazine Quillette was headlined *It's Time for LGB and T to Go Their Separate Ways*. In essence he argued that gender and biological sex are the same and, therefore, sexual orientation is inseparable from gender.

According to Polumbo sex is set at birth. "My sexual attraction is based on hard-wired factors beyond my control," he wrote. "Transgenderism is a separate concept [because] it offers a categorical redefinition of what it means to be a man or a woman." Polumbo, a self-described conservative gay man, wants nothing to do with what he considers radical gender theory.

I guess it's fair to call all the new letters beyond the original LGBT "radical theory," and indeed the LGBT letters were and continue to be radical. But what's wrong with being radical?

Radical comes from the word "root," and the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin's observation is one for the ages. "I don't know how radical you are, or how radical I am," he said. "One can never be radical enough; that is, one must always try to be as radical as reality itself." Wow!

Queer scholar Judith Butler was indeed radical in her groundbreaking 1990 book, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, in which she introduced the theory of "gender performativity." It's a complex concept, and one that has led to a whole new field of scholarship.

Building on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Butler maintains that one is not born a certain gender, but rather becomes a woman or man through a stylized repetition of acts determined by social, cultural and political forces. Although gender is performed and socially constructed, it is no less real. In fact, it is the performance and discourse that creates the reality.

It's troubling to me, then, that there is so much resistance to LGBTQIA+, not so much from heteronormative folks, but from those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. I've had enough conversations with my LGB brothers and sisters to know that many in these communities have real trouble with the new letters.

Polumbo quotes fellow gay conservative Andrew Sullivan to support his position. "Transgender ideology--including postmodern conceptions of sex and gender--is indeed a threat to homosexuality because it is a threat to biological sex as a concept," wrote Sullivan. And who wants to argue with Andrew Sullivan, who is such a thoughtful and influential writer?

In my decades of college teaching I always tried to create cognitive dissonance in my students to get them to think for themselves. This meant asking questions about everything, especially the received wisdom and cultural influences that they brought into the classroom.

I often told my classes that three things were true about life: chaos, ambiguity and paradox. Perhaps I talked about these a little too much: One class gave me a T-shirt with the three concepts emblazoned on it.

But my professorial observations do speak to the issue at hand. The expanding alphabet and the color additions to the original 1978 rainbow flag (this does indeed present a graphic design challenge) call for more education about what's going on.

There has always been controversy within as well as without the LGBTQ spectrum. For some time, the word homosexual was all there was. Then G for gay came along, and everyone seemed happy. Next, lesbians made a strong case for the L, followed by the B for bisexuals. (Remember that for a while the B was controversial and considered by many as a byway on the road to L or G rather than an orientation of its own.)

After all those who preferred the Q, you could say that the spate of other letters was destined to follow.

It's time we all learn more about the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. The resources available are plenty, and our regional LGBT Center of Central PA, Harrisburg, is an excellent one. Attending the various center events and educational programs, not to mention simply stopping by to chat with our fine staff, will do a lot to clear up misperceptions.

I need to finish this column by expressing some disappointment, and then issuing a challenge to my central Pennsylvania brothers and sisters.

I'm disheartened, and yes, a bit frustrated by those who are too quick to avoid dealing with these thorny issues. Think about it: In 2020 our country is still full of heterosexual people who do not understand and therefore do not accept the LGB spectrum. They just don't get it, and too many seem not to even want to try.

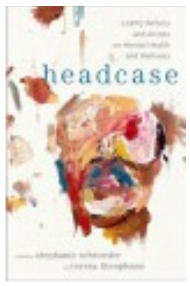
The LGBT Center of Central PA and other organizations fighting the good fight need more support from those who went through their own struggles in the past. We all need to support the people--especially the young people--who now are creating new alphabet letters for themselves. The fight for justice and inclusion is far from over.

We often say we are all in this together, and that means all of us, period. Keep the faith!

Trum Simmons has served on the Board of Directors of The LGBT Center of Central PA.

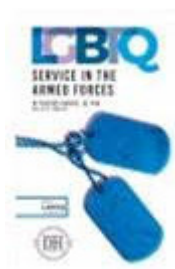
GET ENERGIZED from page 10

Headcase: LGBTQ Writers & Artists on Mental Health and Wellness, edited by Stephanie Schroeder and Teresa Theophano



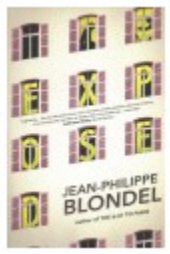
"Headcase is a groundbreaking collection of personal reflections and artistic representations illustrating the intersection of mental wellness, illness, and LGBTQ identity, as well as the lasting impact of historical views equating queer and trans identity with mental illness. The pieces offer personal views from both providers and clients, often one and the same, about their experiences. . . Several contributors also document the difficulty of navigating flawed health care systems that limit affordable access to genuinely affirming, effective services. Cultural norms and barriers to accessibility have an enormous impact on the quality of care available to LGBTQ communities. Traversing boundaries of race and ethnic identity, age, gender identity, and socioeconomic status, Headcase should appeal to LGBTQ communities and, specifically, LGBTQ mental health consumers and their friends, families, and comrades."

LGBTQ Service in the Armed Forces, by Duchess Harris; with Jill C. Wheeler



This book is part of a series that mixes personal stories with legal, historical, global and contemporary perspectives on LBGTQ issues. Geared for tweens and teen readers, this title "looks at enlisted LGBTQ people and legislation that made their experience in the US military difficult. It also discusses how LGBTQ soldiers served during times of war but were often discharged for their gender identity or sexuality after the war."

Exposed, by Jean-Philippe Blondel; translated from the French by Alison Anderson



"Blondel's captivating second novel (following The 6:41 from Paris) tracks an aging high school English teacher's strange relationship with a famous young painter. Louis Claret, approaching 60, lives alone in a small, cold apartment in his provincial French city. His ex-wife, Anne, amicably divorced him years earlier and is happily remarried; his two adult daughters have moved away. Claret's life changes when he is invited to Alexandre Laudin's art opening. Laudin, a local celebrity whose painting has achieved national attention, was Claret's student, but Claret barely remembers him. Laudin invites a surprised Claret to his apartment, shows him a stunning new sequence of triptychs, and makes an unusual offer: he'd like Claret to pose. Claret agrees, and each time he is painted, Blondel reveals more of his past through beautiful, italicized sequences. The experience lets him dwell on a life of roads not taken and of regret mingled with beauty. All along, Laudin reveals his true self, and eventually, Claret is given the chance to strip bare. The novel flies by with gentle humor, but it also poses complex questions about the meaning of art and sexuality, and offers an elegiac look at late middle age. Claret's evolution is irresistible, and the story's fundamental kindness sets it apart."

INTRODUCING GLO from page 19

I am incredibly grateful for each of our partners - UPMC Pinnacle, Valley Youth House, and Hamilton Health Center. The scarcity model tells us that by bringing more organizations to the table there would be less in it for each of us, but we have experienced the opposite. By each of us bringing our different resources to the project, we have been able to make this much stronger than any of us could have on our own.

What does this collaboration look like in practice? One of the unique aspects of GLO is the shared staffing. As a collaborative program, there are seven staff on-site from all four partner agencies that work as a team under the leadership of Amanda Carter, Director of Youth Programs for the LGBT Center and for GLO. They collectively staff the center and providing programming, as well as have specific functions including peer engagement, case management, HIV/STI testing and education, and program coordination.

The space has been open to participants since December 2, 2019, with programming ranging in topic from healthy relationships and holistic wellness to HIV/STI education and financial literacy. Drop-in hours for youth (ages 14-17) are Mondays and Fridays from 3-8p.m., and for young adults (ages 18-29) are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3-8p.m.

GLO's mission is to maintain a space in which men who have sex with men and trans women of color have access to the support and resources necessary to create holistically healthy lives, relationships and communities by offering HIV and STI education, testing, prevention, and linkage to care. Its vision is to empower members of our communities to live healthy, authentic lives.

If you're part of GLO's priority communities, we encourage you to come during drop-in hours to 1701 N. Third Street. If you have a friend, family member, or client who would benefit from this space, please share this information with them. If you have ideas about how you or your organization can collaborate with GLO, we'd love to hear that too.

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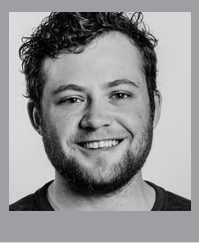
Reminiscing on my 10-year journey

Trans Man Diary



By Atticus Ranck

I often look around me and feel so incredibly blessed and grateful for my life. This hasn't always been the case, but life has just gotten better and better and I'm so lucky to lead the life I do.

There is so many challenging events going on in the world. 311 transgender people were murdered in 2019 (that we know of). LGBTQ+ protections are constantly under threat. Climate change is threatening our very existence. There's no escaping the political upheaval taking place in our government. There's a lot to be worried about.

But today I want to take a less macroscopic view and I encourage each of you to think about how far you've also come in your own personal journey.

The #10YearChallenge was taken over social media at the end of 2019. For those unfamiliar with this challenge, it consists of posting side-by-side photos of yourself on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to gauge how much you've changed in 10 years. 10 years ago, I was 20 years old, in college, still identifying as female, and an out lesbian. I didn't have the best relationship with my parents. I was starting to drink heavily.

7 years ago, I graduated from college and was working at a bakery for the summer (where I was forced to wear a skirt) and living at my parent's house in rural Lancaster, PA.

6 and a half years ago, I was questioning my gender identity and using alcohol to help me cope with it and with the stress of graduate school.

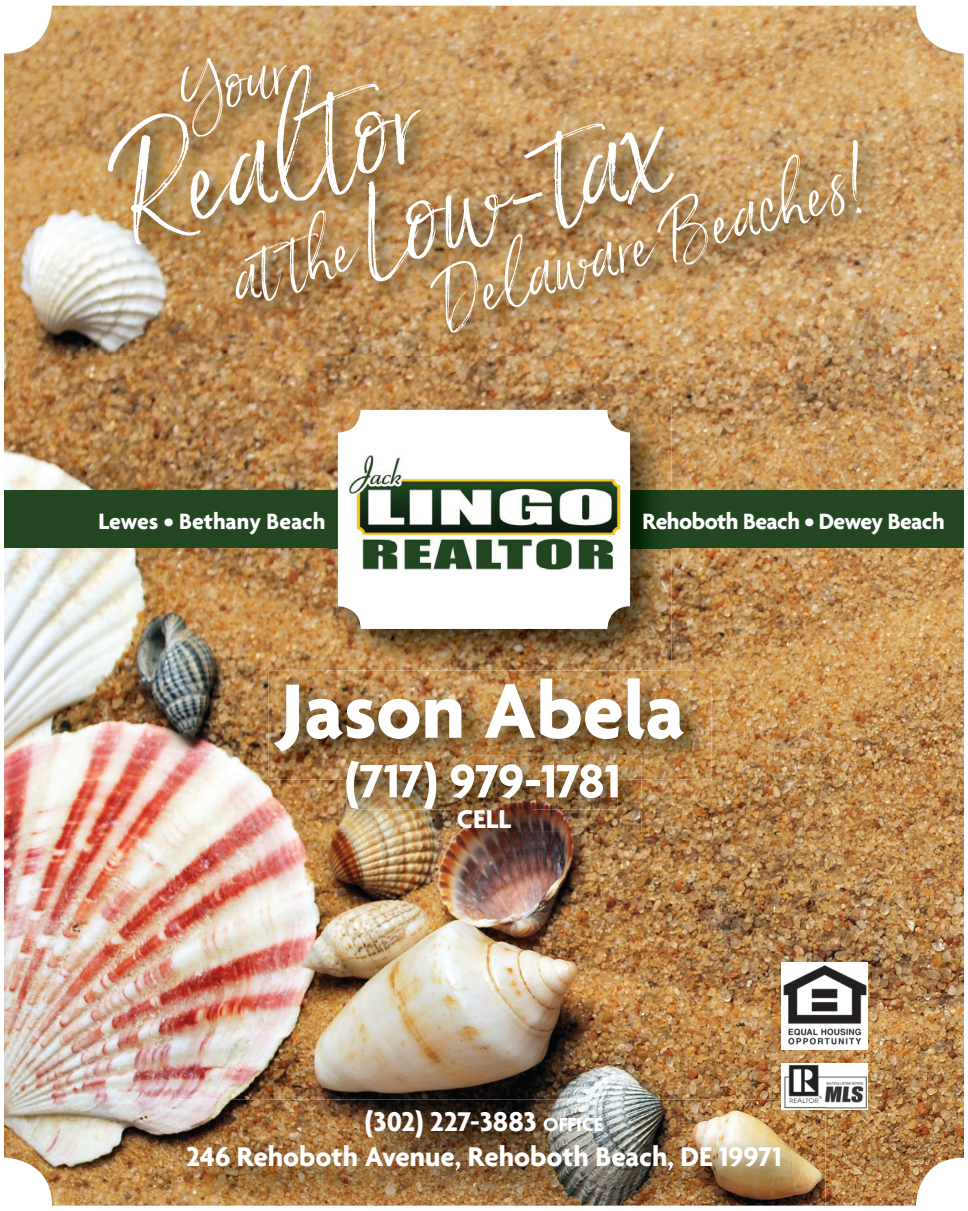
5 years ago, I was caught drinking and driving, and was kicked out of the room I was renting, and my then-girlfriend broke up with me. I started my journey to sobriety almost immediately after that.

My life has changed dramatically since that time. Now I have a beautiful wife and a strong relationship. We are living in our second home that we're enjoying fixing up and making our own. We have a Shetland Sheepdog named Archie and a cat named Oliver. I have a job I enjoy, making enough money to cover all our bills and save some extra. We traded in Sebastian's car and sold mine and bought a 2017 SUV. We paid off all our credit card debt. We're enjoying our new neighborhood, which has all the stores we need close by, yet also has the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains, and the Hudson River all within easy reach. I am incredibly happy with the life I chose. Sometimes after work when my wife and I are cuddling on the couch watching TV, we just look around us and feel incredibly blessed and happy to be living the life we've chosen for ourselves.

It didn't just come to us, happenstance. We both transitioned genders, knowing we could (and have) lost family and friends and career prospects. I got sober. I moved (multiple times) to entirely new states where I didn't know anyone in order to start a new journey in order to try to further my career. I've had plenty of privilege to get me to where I am, but I also took big risks, too – never wanting to settle, always conscientious about figuring out what was important to me and going after it.

I've been fired from a job. I've been sexually assaulted. I'm an alcoholic. I used to smoke cigarettes. I've bounced around apartments. Life hasn't been easy, but it's absolutely been worth it.

I'm sure there are plenty of bumps in the road ahead. I'll tackle them when they happen. For now, I'm trying to focus on all the good things I have and to be grateful for it.



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The road to recovery led me to Chipotle...and healing

The Blake Late Show

By Ron Blake

(This is the last in a series of stories of my incredible and innovative journey beyond PTSD/sexual assault. It will hopefully open up important dialogues about PTSD/sexual assault in all our communities)

I'm still on this quixotic 1,288 day cross country journey to overcome PTSD from a sexual assault and to become a guest on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*.

My 28,000 mile road to recovery led me to my neighborhood Chipotle restaurant one afternoon. A most unusual place to realize something super important about my healing process.

A woman working there recognized me as a frequent patron and asked me if I ever grow tired of eating the same food so often. My response came very quickly. It was as though I'd waited a lifetime for someone to ask me that question and on this day it finally happened. Out poured the answer.

I told her I went through a trauma that almost killed me one night and that I was just happy to be alive and eating… any kind of food.

That seems to be something so insignificant to say. It wasn't.

Everyone within earshot of me at that busy restaurant paused for a few seconds. All of the workers. All of the customers in line. All of the people at the adjacent tables. All eyes were focused on me. My words were simple but powerful.

A man behind me broke the silence and patted me on the back, shook his head up and down, and said thank you. His words spoke for everyone on that occasion. Thank you for letting us all know what is truly important in life.

During our summer Pride season, let's all embrace change through simple and powerful words. Remember what is important. Remember who you are. Remember to be proud.

Pride festivals give us the chance to look at all the accomplishments we've ALL created together. Pride parades give us the opportunity to let the world see that we still need to make changes to help the marginalized.

Gay men like me who have experienced sexual assaults are especially marginalized. That means we are treated as peripheral in our society. That means we are seen as insignificant.

That further just means we aren't going to let that happen to any member of our community. We all deserve to be heard and helped.

We were all invited to this world for a reason. So we could dance.

Dancing can be elegant. It can be fast. It can be smooth. It can be short. It can be sexy. It can be loud. We each choose a style that fits who we are. The variety is what makes life so amazing.

During this awesome Pride season, let's reach out to our brothers (and sisters) in our LGBT community who have experienced sexual assault. We can't let these friends sit down in a corner while the rest of us dance. We take care of each other. Our community is powerful when we are all on the dance floor.

What began from a moment of laughter on that suicidal night for me has become such a collective story of hope and support for lots of us. I have traveled across this country for those 1,288 days and I've taken the hands (and messages) of 28,921 complete strangers and they have joined me for the dance.

I am going to keep waltzing my way with those tens of thousands of messages to The Late Show in New York City. I will continue to meet strangers each day on this incredible journey to help me and many others overcome PTSD and sexual assault.

I invite you to join me on BlakeLateShow.com and share in this journey.

Together we shall heal. Together we shall stand. Together we shall dance…and laugh with Stephen Colbert.

This article of pride, hope and support is brought to you by that guy with a lot more to share. That guy with more stories than colors in the rainbow is Ron Blake. You can find him beaming at BlakeLateShow.com.

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HAIR ON FIRE

Pennsylvania lawmaker aims to stamp out hair-based discrimination

By Allison Stevens
Capital-Star Washington Bureau

When a black New Jersey teen was forced to cut his dreadlocks in order to participate in a high school wrestling match in late 2018, U.S. Rep. Dwight Evans, D-3rd District, was taken aback.

The wrestler, Andrew Johnson, received a hurried haircut after he was told by a referee that his hair violated wrestling rules. He won the match and state officials opened a civil rights investigation, *The New York Times* reported.

Now members of Congress are trying to make sure that never happens again.

The Pennsylvania Democrat and other federal lawmakers are pushing for a bill that would ban discrimination based on hair textures and styles, which backers say would improve equity in education, employment, housing and other public programs.

Their bill, known as the CROWN Act, would clarify that discrimination based on race or national origin encompasses hair texture and style. The legislative language specifically names styles commonly associated with black people, such as dreadlocks, cornrows, twists and Bantu knots.

Introduced in December, the bill has the support of more than three dozen House Democrats, including Evans. No other Pennsylvania lawmaker has signed on to the bill — or a companion measure in the Senate — at this point.

"The whole thing is to stamp out discrimination," Evans told the *Capital-Star*. "That's the message to it all."

The issue is of particular concern to black women, whose hair is more likely than white women's hair to be perceived as "unprofessional," according to a 2019 study of 2,000 black and white women. It was supported by Dove, a beauty company that came under fire in 2017 for an ad that featured a black woman who took off her shirt and transformed into a white woman.

The study finds that black women are also more likely than white women to be sent home from their workplace because of their hair and more likely to report harsh judgments based on looks. Four out of five said they have to change their hair from its natural state to fit in at the office.

But women aren't the only victims of hair-based discrimination.

"This is about men as well," said U.S. Rep. Rep. Brenda Lawrence, D-Mich., citing Johnson, the high school wrestler from New Jersey. Another example: Last October, Penn State football player Jonathan Sutherland received a letter calling his dreadlocks "awful" and "disgusting."

Another high-profile incident involves Chastity Jones, a black woman who applied for a job in 2010 as a customer service representative with Catastrophe Management Solutions (CMS), an insurance claims company in Alabama. She got the job, but the company rescinded the offer because she wouldn't comply with a request to cut her dreadlocks.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed a lawsuit against CMS, but a district court ruled for the company, arguing that its grooming policy did not constitute intentional discrimination because hair styles, unlike skin color, are not an "immutable" characteristic.

The Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the decision in 2016.

A 'legal fiction'

Wendy Greene, a law professor at Drexel University, disputed the court's reasoning, calling the doctrine of immutability a "legal fiction" that is "rooted in a discredited view of race as biological and unchangeable." People classify individuals racially through various characteristics, including hairstyles and texture, she said in an interview, noting that such characteristics were used as a basis to enslave people.

Black women in particular have a "narrow way" in which they can show up at work, she said. Conforming to biases favoring straight hair can be exhausting, timely and expensive, not to mention a threat to physical and mental health. "Our federal civil rights laws absolutely can and should protect against systematic discrimination," she said.

Jones sought to appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, but the court did not grant a motion that would have allowed the case to continue.

But that doesn't mean change isn't taking place.

In the last decade, the U.S. military changed its policies regarding women's hairstyles in response to objections of racial bias from members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Policies have improved, but some restrictions remain, according to Samara Sheff, a spokeswoman for Wisconsin Democratic Rep. Gwen Moore, a member of the caucus.

Last year, California, New York and New Jersey, as well as New York City, Cincinatti and Montgomery County, Md. — enacted bans on hair-based discrimination.

Lawmakers in about a dozen other states — including Pennsylvania — have introduced similar state-level legislation.

Even so, action at the state and local levels is not enough, said Lawrence of Michigan. A federal law is needed to clarify, strengthen and unify anti-discrimination laws across the country.

The CROWN Act will "send a message" that discrimination is not acceptable, Evans said.

Lawrence says the bill has the support it needs in the Democratic-controlled House, and said the Congressional Black Caucus — of which she and Evans are members — is pushing for a committee hearing on the issue this year.

But prospects on the other side of the Capitol are dim.

U.S. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., introduced a companion measure in the Senate in December.

But the GOP-controlled chamber is consumed with impeachment for the moment, and the presidential election year will make bipartisan agreement more difficult to achieve. Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has been sitting on hundreds of bills passed by the Democratic-led House.

Evans declined to speculate about prospects in the upper chamber. "That's an independent body from the House," he said.

Even if the federal legislation doesn't pass soon, the broader campaign to end hair-based discrimination could usher in larger social change, according to

Steven Gatley, a California attorney who specializes in employment law.

Federal, state and local initiatives are raising awareness about the problem and could encourage employers across the country to review grooming policies on their own, he said. In doing so, they may find that their hair-related policies are out of date, he said.

Pennsylvania Capital-Star, where this story first appeared, and The Central Voice are content-sharing partners.

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